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# THE SMART SET

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# A New Feature in the NOVEMBER SMART SET

EVERYBODY LIKES THE THEATRE, AND ANYTHING CONNECTED WITH IT. IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT AN ARTICLE DEALING WITH THE STAGE SHOULD BE BURDENED WITH COMMONPLACE PHOTOGRAPHS OF ACTORS AND ACTRESSES. THE ARTICLE ITSELF SHOULD BE OF SUFFICIENT INTEREST TO CLAIM THE READER'S ATTENTION. IF IT IS NOT, IT SHOULD FIND NO PLACE

APPRECIATING THIS FACT, SMART SET HAVE ARRANGED THREE ARTICLES ON THE TO BE SEEN IN NEW YORK THEATRE. CHANNING POLLOCK, WRIGHT AND CRITIC, HAS PREPARED THEM, BECAUSE OF HIS SUBJECT, AND THE DRAMATIC CRITICISM. THE



IN A STANDARD MAGAZINE.

THE EDITORS OF THE SMART SET HAVE RANGED FOR A SERIES OF LEADING PLAYS THAT ARE DURING THE COMING WINTER. THE WELL-KNOWN PLAYERS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED TO PRESENT THEM, BECAUSE OF HIS INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

OF HIS SUBJECT, AND THE DRAMATIC CRITICISM. THE CHANNING POLLOCK FIRST PAPER OF THE SERIES WILL APPEAR NEXT MONTH. MR. POLLOCK RECENTLY RETURNED FROM AN EXTENDED TOUR ABROAD, AND SAW OVER SEVENTY PLAYS DURING HIS TRIP. MANY OF THESE WILL BE PRODUCED IN THE METROPOLIS THIS SEASON, AND HE WILL WRITE ENTERTAININGLY OF THEM UNDER THE TITLE "SOME FAR-AWAY PLAYS."

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# SPINNERS OF FATE

By H. Cheriton Hilgate

"This day we fashion Destiny, our web of Fate we spin."

—WHITTIER.

## I

THE *Prinz Georg Ernst*, mail and passenger steamer from Queenborough Pier to Flushing, lay calmly at her moorings—a dark, indistinct outline looming out of the night fog—while aboard her all was hurry and bustle—officials dashing to and fro, Dutch sailors—stumpy little men in sloppy blue blouses—grabbing hurriedly at bags, rugs and other impedimenta from the passengers jostling one another on the pier.

The luggage was still being swung on board with miraculous speed and ease, though some might quake and groan in spirit at the irreverence with which dress-baskets and hat-boxes were handled; the boat train was still disgorging its much bewrapped occupants; down the river lights twinkled through the thin white mist, and strangers were smiling at each other and saying, "Calm crossing!" in tones of complacent relief.

Brian Wilbraham had been one of the first to leave the train and fight his way, unhampered by dependence on the band of porters that cluster like carrion-crows round the carriage doors, down the covered way to the boat. He was very tired, but there was a cheerfulness in the way he carried his gladstone—even in the way he walked—that bespoke the hard-worked parson starting on his holiday. He was tall and very lean, though the latter fact was partially disguised by a heavy Inverness;

and above the white woolen scarf that now enveloped his Roman collar and long neck, his clean-shaven face was almost ascetic in appearance. He had a habit of swinging his head back as he walked, in a way that one is tempted to believe must be almost consciously cultivated by a certain class of the clergy, and under his soft clerical hat crisp, closely cut hair was beginning to turn gray. In short, the Reverend Brian Wilbraham was just the sort of man whose appearance acts as a spur to the devotion of some among those young ladies who sacrifice themselves upon the altar of "parish work." But—and this is the literal truth—he was a unique specimen in that he was absolutely unaware of the fact.

He was accustomed to much goodwill from men, and from women; and he met it in the latter case with the same serene absence of self-consciousness as in the former. Perhaps there was a shade more cordiality in his relations with his own sex. He had a very high opinion of women, based on intimate knowledge of the character of a sister who had lived with him for the three years of his first curacy; and he was apt to treat them with the slightly distant courtesy inspired by honest reverence. He had been engaged once, and the girl had thrown him over for an old lover living in the neighborhood; whereupon he had given up the country curacy and become one of a staff of six under the enthusiastic vicar of a large town parish, living in the clergy-house, and facing a broken life with courage and a healthy determination that his wound

should heal. That was five years ago, and he was his old self again. Having missed his yearly holiday owing to a virulent outbreak of smallpox in the parish, he was now exchanging for six weeks with the poverty-stricken chaplain of a little German town, who could afford by no other means to return to London for the very necessary purpose of renewing his wardrobe at an English tailor's.

"Number 14," murmured Wilbraham to himself, as he stepped up on the gangway, pressed forward by the crush behind and trying not to tread on the heels of those in front. "Number 14," he repeated, unconsciously aloud, and at the sound the passenger directly in front of him half turned quickly, and then pushed forward with fresh energy. The movement attracted his attention, and he looked down at her and saw the top of a rough felt wideawake hat resting on thick plaits of dark hair, which were coiled around her head and met the turned-up collar of a heavy, full-length, blue traveling-coat. She carried a rug over her left arm and a small dressing-case in her left hand; her right guarded her advance across the gangway by holding the rail firmly.

"A tall woman," was the only impression his view of her conveyed to him, as he followed her across the deck and down the companion. She seemed to know her way well, he reflected, and Farquharson's last piece of advice flew into his mind: "Scoot down for all you're worth if you want to bag a cabin." That explained her hurry! He hastened his steps and they reached the little office window together, where half-a-dozen others were already clamoring for tickets.

The woman in the long coat pressed forward and caught the attention of the clerk.

"Fourteen, *please*," she cried quickly, with a shameless disregard of justice and fair play as interpreted by the old saw, "First come, first served," and held aloft a fat brown purse.

The Dutch clerk's watery-blue eyes showed a gleam of interest, and his

stolid features relaxed to something like a smile, as he stamped the paper ticket and handed it to her across the shoulders of a stout man moving away, and nodded assent to a few words she uttered in rapid German.

The faintest suspicion of annoyance flashed across Wilbraham's mind. On the way down from town he had studied the plan of the steamer with a view to this moment, and—for no reason that he could remember—had selected Number 14 as the cabin he should occupy. He had no other number in reserve and saw plainly that if he did not follow her example he should have to sleep in the saloon—a fate against which Farquharson had warned him in lurid terms—for eager applicants were pressing up and trying to edge past his broad shoulders.

"Fifteen!" he cried at random, and to his relief the stolid clerk (who did not unbend for *him*) promptly stamped and handed him the little slip, with the casual remark, "Doo ozzzer Herren mid—"

Wilbraham took the ticket, somewhat puzzled. Two other Herren what? And at that moment he met the half-amused, half-apologetic glance of the woman in the blue coat. Only she was a girl. You really couldn't call her a woman, Brian said to himself, while his alert gray eyes took in every detail of her appearance. She might have been four-and-twenty, and her face had the freshness and youth that seem to belong to English girlhood only. It was a bright, cheery face, with warm color, a short straight nose, rather freckled—large, deep, long-lashed eyes of dark brown, and wisps of dark hair that suggested curls escaping from the masses brushed back under her hat. Her long coat hanging open disclosed an unmistakable English "tailor-made" coat and skirt of navy blue, with a glimpse of flannel shirt at the neck and a blue stock tie topped with a lawn collar that looked snowy against her clear warm skin.

As he disentangled himself from the pushing crowd, still with his eyes on hers, she hesitated a moment and then

came forward with the frankest smile of apology.

"I ought to be ashamed of myself!" she said impulsively, "but I hope you don't mind, really? I heard you saying 'fourteen' to yourself as we crossed the gangway—and it's the cabin I *always* get, so I felt I must have it again. Please forgive me."

Brian had raised his hat as she spoke, and as she finished he hurried out an eager disclaimer.

"No! I assure you it doesn't make the least difference to me. I only pitched on fourteen by chance," he answered, with his kindest smile. Then, as an idea struck him, "But would you mind telling me what that fellow said?" he asked, as of an old friend.

"I thought you looked vague," she responded. "'Doo Herren mid,' he said, didn't he? German 'mit' (he's a Dutchman), which means that you will have two more men to share the cabin. I'm so sorry!" penitently. "I feel as if it were my fault, but with this crowd it would probably have happened anyhow. Good evening," and she smiled again, bowed and disappeared down the long corridor.

Number 15, Brian found, was at the extreme end, on the port side of the stern; and the occupants of the other berths were already in possession, two snugly ensconced and provided—gruesome sight—with tin basins, and a third groaning audibly as he sat on his bag on the floor and leaned a bald head wearily against the lower inside berth.

Brian surveyed the trio with much distaste and decided at once not to undress, so that if—well, if the unpleasantness became too pronounced, he could seek a quieter spot in the refreshment saloon or on deck. The heat of the airless little cabin was suffocating, and he hung up his Inverness and bag and lay down in his berth just as the hawsters were loosed, and the swish of water across the porthole announced that the boat had started down the river.

"Thank goodness it's a calm night," murmured the bald man on the floor. "I shall be all right presently"; and,

"Thank goodness for that!" fervently ejaculated Wilbraham in his soul.

It was indeed calm; even later, when the boat left the river for the open channel, no movement was to be felt. The wind hung dead, and the *Prinz Georg Ernst*, with her engines pulsing and boards creaking, cut levelly through a sea like a millpond. The bald-headed man's groans ceased, and Brian Wilbraham fell asleep.

## II

HE was at the dentist's and had just had a tooth pulled out violently with a loud, grating scr-runch that seemed to go right through him, when he awoke, suddenly alert, and listened.

The bald-headed man slept and snored serenely in his uncomfortable position; one of the others turned over and stared sleepily at Brian.

"What's up?" he inquired, rubbing his eyes. "We aren't there yet, are we?"

"I don't know; but something," replied Wilbraham to the first question, listening acutely; and even as he spoke steps hurried down the passage and the conviction forced itself on him that something was serious.

In a moment he was in the corridor.

There stood the girl from Number 14, of which the door was swinging to and fro, and she was inquiring in a voice of utmost self-possession, "What's happened?" of a white-faced official dashing past. He took no notice of her, but sped into a black cupboard-looking space and closed what seemed to be a porthole.

Another official at this moment ran along past the fast-opening doors out of which heads on diversely-clad shoulders peered anxiously.

"Have you warned the passengers on deck?" he demanded hastily of the first official, whose terror was evident from his trembling voice and whitish-gray complexion.

The eyes of the travelers met.

"A collision," remarked the girl quietly to Wilbraham. "We'd better go up."

She was standing beneath the glare of the electric bulb which touched her ruffled hair to a halo of coppery lights—she, too, had gone to bed dressed, except for the removal of gloves and hat, coat and shoes. She disappeared into her cabin as Brian hastily turned and entered his. The word "collision" was flying over the boat as the two reappeared simultaneously, having simply seized their coats and keys, and walked up on deck together.

"I've locked my bag," said the girl to Wilbraham. "If we're going to be drowned it doesn't matter; but meanwhile I'd rather feel no valiant spirit can get at it and meddle with it," and she looked up at him with easy friendliness.

The man's face was grave.

"Is there really any danger, do you suppose?" he asked her as they reached the deck, and the fresh cold air struck on their faces. It was a night of wonderful stillness. The soft, vague starlight of early September, dimmed by white mists that hung round the boat like a thick veil, gave just enough glimmer to make of the darkness shadows faint or deep.

A yellow glare from the portholes threw long steady gleams on the dark, glassy surface of a motionless sea. Far, far it seemed in the distance, a single fixed light throbbled through the mist. Every now and then flash-lights fell weirdly and in vain across the invisible waters; or the fog-horn uttered its melancholy warning, to be answered by another from the direction where the one bright light hung as if poised in mid-air; the engines had ceased working, and in the oppressive pause scared Dutch sailors were trying in feverish haste to lower the boats.

Lost in a strange world of mist and water, of vague outline and haunted silence, cut off, it seemed, from all sense of sight and sound, time and space, and with their feet set on that narrow borderland that divides life and death, two travelers met and joined hands—for good, or ill?

"Is there really any danger, I won-

der?" Brian repeated, as the girl did not answer.

"I know no more than you do," she replied, as if they were safe in a London drawing-room, wondering when tea would be brought in. "I woke feeling a tremendous shock and then heard a harsh, grating sound, like a giant carriage-accident. But wait," and she turned and spoke in German to a little man standing near.

He answered her in swift and, to Brian, incomprehensible chatter, waving his arms and pointing excitedly to the stern.

By this time the deck was crowded with shivering passengers in cloaks and coats hastily donned over every stage of undress and half-fastened garments. They were very quiet, but their faces for the most part showed pale and anxious in the dim light that filtered through the windows of the deck-shelter.

As the little foreigner spoke, the girl's face grew grave.

"The engines are damaged," she interpreted to Wilbraham, "and they're expected to burst at any moment. It's hardly possible to save us, but the boats are being lowered—only it appears the sailors have rather lost their heads. We've signaled to the boat that ran into us to stand by—she's a schooner, they think, and we crossed her bows in the fog; that's her light over there—she can't come any nearer owing to the danger. This man wants us to go and look at the stern; the railings are smashed, and there's a huge hole, he says; but I don't think we will, do you?" Her clear, steady eyes looked up at him with quiet unconcern.

"Then it's death," said Wilbraham, startled, but speaking calmly.

The girl nodded. "Any moment," she repeated. "Let's walk about; I hadn't time to put on my shoes, and my feet are so cold in stockings."

"I'll get your shoes," he exclaimed quickly, and was turning, but she stopped him with a hand on his arm.

"Rubbish!" she cried, and laughed; then sobered again. "It may be any

moment, and if we're to die, we won't be caught boxed up down there, let's be out in the open, under God's sky, with only the solemn sea to hold us, and the mist for a funeral pall."

Shespoke simply, without affectation, yet with a ring in her voice that in other circumstances she would probably have hushed. Face to face with any of the great facts of life we fling off easily the cloak of false shame and self-consciousness which education has wrapped round us, and realize—how quickly!—the utter insignificance of the vulgar little god, Conventionality.

Brian looked down into the starlit peace of her steadfast eyes, and on those serene heights of courage his soul leapt to meet hers, as friend meets friend on the battlefield of truth. They paced slowly along the deck, side by side, between the awestruck groups of men and women—some talking in low, trembling tones, some weeping softly, others clinging together in terror; but there was no panic, no haste. As a little fear "leaveneth the whole lump," so it is with self-possession: the very atmosphere becomes impregnated with the serenity of one or two calm souls and soothes insensibly the strained nerves of all.

A silence fell between Wilbraham and his companion which she was the first to break.

"What time is it?"

He peered at his watch and told her half-past two.

"I wish it would not be such grief to those we leave," she said, with a new wistfulness in her voice. "Is it your mother who will mourn most for you?"

"No, my mother died years ago," he replied gravely. "It is my sister I'm thinking of. But there will be many to miss you!" he added in quick sympathy.

"No," she responded thoughtfully.

"There are my friends; but perhaps—I think—they'll guess what an easy solution it is to my life's problem. My mother—" she hesitated. "I dare say she will be very grieved, poor mother; but it will simplify matters for her, too."

The words struck Wilbraham, even at this moment, with a curious sense of incongruity, coming as they did from one so young. "A simple solution of my life's problem—"

"Tell me how," he said instinctively; and it struck neither of them that five hours ago they had not met.

In the dusk her face grew suddenly set and stern, and he saw she might have been ten years older than he had thought her. Then it softened again, and she sighed gently.

"Don't let's talk about me now," she said. "It's not a happy story, mine; but I'll tell you—if we live, tomorrow; and if not—" There was a rush of hurrying feet, the saw of ropes, and the first boat slid into the water.

"Women and children!" came the cry, and Brian turned to his companion and seized her arm to hurry her to the side.

"But I'm not going!" she declared, and shook her head, laughing.

"Nonsense!" he cried, startled. "Of course you must go. Be quick!"

She faced him. "What!" she exclaimed, in half-amused, half-indignant scorn. "You think I will go and leave you!"

Wilbraham stared at her aghast and his eyes glowed.

"What rubbish!" he cried in tones of exasperation. "It's your duty to save yourself if possible, and it's our privilege to see that the women go first. You *shall* go."

"I never understand how they can do it!" she remarked, still half-laughing and quietly obstinate.

"You *must* go!" Brian repeated, with sudden anger, and caught her arm.

"And leave a friend?" she suggested indignantly. "Would you? I *won't*, then!" and she turned swiftly and ran softly, in her stockinged feet, in the opposite direction. It was at that moment that a shout went up from the group nearest the companion ladder.

"Safe!" they cried. "Danger past!" and the news hurriedly passed from lip to lip. The engineer had discovered that the damage to the engines was



remediable, and at any rate all danger of their bursting was now over. The hole in the stern had been sufficiently plugged, and the *Prinz Georg Ernst* would lie to for another half-hour while repairs were completed, and then proceed to Flushing.

### III

THE Unknown Woman had stopped as the cry rang out that declared their deliverance; she moved back toward the man who had shared her suspense—and then suddenly turned deadly white.

He caught her quickly and half-led, half-carried her into the shelter, where she sank down on a roll of baggage, her eyes closed. But before he could call to the steward down the companion ladder she had recovered, and was looking up at him with shamefaced laughter and pain mingled in her eyes, though her lips twitched pitifully.

"How stupid of me!" she murmured apologetically. "I'm so sorry!"

"It was the strain," he replied, regarding her with anxiety. "If you're all right for a minute, I'll get you some brandy."

"No, thank you. Indeed," she exclaimed earnestly, "I'm all right now. But this *mauvais quart d'heure* has been like fainting, hasn't it? The worst part coming back! I did think it had come to an end at last!"

Two large tears filled her eyes and rolled slowly down her cheeks, but she conquered them bravely, while he watched her with his heart swelling with helpless sympathy.

"Perhaps I'd better have something, after all," she said in a moment or two. "But coffee, please—very strong. I'm all right now," she repeated, and forced a trembling smile, and he sped down to the refreshment-saloon.

It seemed an incredibly short time that brought him dashing back, with her shoes and spats, which he held aloft in apologetic triumph.

"It was very rude of me to trespass," he said, smiling, as he noticed

that the color was coming back to her face. "But mine is a valiant spirit, you see, and given to meddling!"

She laughed at his quoting of her words. "Moreover," he went on, "a fellow-curate of mine instilled no end of good advice into me before I started—one of his maxims being that cold feet are the surest cause of sea-sickness—"

"And you were afraid of having to convey a green-faced creature down to the stewardess!" she interrupted, laughing again and more naturally this time, he thought thankfully.

"No, no," he protested, with a gravity that answered her smile; "I was tempted by the same selfless motives as Aunt Jobiska."

"Who is Aunt Jobiska?" she inquired, as he fastened the second spat and stood upright again before her.

"What! you have never heard of her?" he exclaimed, taking from a waiter who had just appeared a tray on which were a cup of coffee, roll, butter and egg. "But what scandalous ignorance!"

"For his Aunt Jobiska said, 'No harm Can come to his toes if his nose is warm.'"

"Has that immortal couplet no memories for you?"

She shook her head, smiling.

"I believe you made it up, this minute!" she accused him, and turned to the tray which he had laid on the plush-covered seat beside her.

"Thank you so much," she went on gratefully. "But aren't you going to have anything yourself? You must be cold, too."

"I'll get mine presently," he answered hastily, watching her as she drank some coffee and attacked the egg, almost herself again.

"This, I suppose, is real Dresden?" he continued, nodding toward the cup which was of such solidity that its brim looked a veritable mouthful, and talking nonsense in desperate fear lest she should again lose her self-command.

"Yes," she answered gravely, "a very special kind—like the German bands that the Happy Fatherland sends to us," she added wickedly.

"But that's mean of me!" with quick compunction, "for Germany and the Germans have been too good to me for me to make unkind fun of them."

"Well, it was not a very brutal thing to say!" he answered, with a smile, defending her. "You would admit, I suppose, that there are German bands in Germany *better* than those which make music in our streets? Not that I know anything of the country," he added. "Their music may be all of the same drum-smashing, nerve-wearing, mind-exhausting brand as the samples that I have come across."

"No, indeed, it's not! But is this your first visit?" she asked with interest, making satisfactory way with the *Brötchen*, despite the stale, sandy flavor that seems inevitable in all steamer food.

"My very first," he replied, seating himself on a portmanteau; "and the only words of the language that I know are *Mann, Frau, Brod, Trink* and *Geld!*"

"And even those you can't pronounce!" she cried with amusement.

"That's unkind!" he retorted. "How do you pronounce them then? I have a nice little book of useful conversations, such as 'Where are my boots?' 'Pardon, sir, do not speak so fast,' and so on, but I admit that the pronunciation is a difficulty not provided for."

"*Mann, Frau, Brod, Trink* (that's the only one you had right and it would be hard to get it wrong!) and *Geld*," she laughed. "What town are you going to?"

"Gotha," he answered at once, "and don't tell me *that's* mispronounced," he added with pretended indignation, as he saw amazement in her eyes.

"No, no!" she cried eagerly, "but *Gotha!* Why, so am I! How nice! We can travel together, and I'll give you some German lessons on the way!"

"Really?" his face lighted up. "That would be delightful! But imagine your being bound for Gotha, too! What luck! I was told it's an almost undiscovered neighborhood to the English."

"There *are* very few there," she acquiesced. "That's one reason I like it so much better than Dresden. But those who once go there go again. And I think Gotha is particularly fortunate in its English visitors, too—myself, for example!" she added with charming impertinence and glancing merrily at him. "But look!" she exclaimed suddenly, popping the last mouthful into her mouth and standing up. "I'm *thoroughly* ashamed of myself! Here have I been stuffing at my leisure, while you (who look very tired yourself) have been patiently waiting till I chose to stop. Why, it's nearly half-past three. I'm going now to lie down for an hour, and you must please promise me to go and have a good—supper? breakfast?—what is this meal?—and then get a rest yourself."

"You're really all right then; sure?" He smiled; she evidently was.

"Quite, *quite!*" she answered earnestly. "And thank you so much for all your care of me." They walked below together into the refreshment-saloon packed with chattering, nerve-shaken, queer-costumed passengers, too thoroughly excited to go back to their berths; and she crossed the saloon, turned at the entrance to the corridor and looked back at him. "*Auf wiedersehen!*" she said, with the friendliest nod, and disappeared.

Wilbraham put down the tray, paid the bill, ordered some food for himself, and stood at the circular counter to eat it.

His mind, hitherto engrossed with the stranger so suddenly thrown across his path, had time to return to the accident and the short fifteen minutes when he had been forced to stand without warning face to face with death. It struck him now with some surprise that he had been so unconcernedly ready to accept without any touch of regret the snatching away of a life in which he was healthy-minded enough to rejoice despite the crosses and hardships, griefs and fears, which no life worth living lacks, and which he was honestly thankful to have given back to him.

He realized—and admitted to himself with a candid wonder, childlike in its simplicity—that he had come through a great crisis, without dishonor; that he had shown himself worthy of what?—of whom? Of the courageous woman with whom he had shared that period of tense waiting. He stopped abruptly as he saw where the train of thought was leading him, and laughed rather contemptuously. "Conceited ass!" he muttered to himself angrily. "Worthy? Fool! Bounder! I don't even know her name!"

In sudden, unaccountable irritation he asked for his bill, paid it, and pulling a pipe out of his pocket, proceeded on deck, where he was joined by a snuffy individual eager to discuss their late experience in the h-less and lurid accents of the untraveled cockney.

It was a relief, nevertheless, to Wilbraham, and they smoked serenely together, while the mists rolled off and the *Prinz Georg Ernst* throbbed her way perseveringly toward the Dutch coast, just visible as a thin dark line in the uncanny light of a gray dawn.

#### IV

"If it 'adn't 'a' bin so calm, we should 'a' bin liter than this," remarked the cockney, nearly two hours later, sauntering up to Wilbraham, who stood near the side of the boat, laden with his bag and roll of sticks and with a rug and roll not his, waiting for the gangway to be thrown across. Beside him was the traveler in the long blue coat which she was now fastening closely round her, shivering in the cold morning air after a disturbed night.

She looked at the gentleman from Seven Dials (or thereabouts) and nodded. "If we had been later we should have missed the train," she said. "As it is, I doubt if we shall have time to order breakfast," she added, turning to Wilbraham. "By-the-bye, are you a millionaire, or a fool, or only a patron of the humble second, like me?"

"Yes, certainly, I go second. Doesn't my cloth proclaim the fact? Do

only millionaires and fools travel first?" he asked.

"On the continent; or so it is said," she replied. "The Germans express it differently; they say no one but Americans and the English travel first! It's not kind to us, is it? But you know, don't you, that from the moment you touch German soil you're mad?" She caught herself up, as she spoke, and flushed scarlet. "Oh!" she cried, without giving him time to answer, "the loiterers! Why don't they let us go on? I'm longing to get settled in the train, aren't you? And I'm hungry! What shall we have? If we settle now, we may just get it flung in as the train starts."

"Can't we get any breakfast on the train?" suggested Brian, rejoicing inwardly to note how frankly and completely she had accepted him as an old friend.

"I don't think so; nobody ever does, as far as I know. A boy brings it from the Restauration Saal. Last time we had scrambled eggs. Not intentionally; we'd ordered them boiled—but they were dumped down hastily, and by the time we opened the basket what was left of the eggs was scrambled; the rest was on the floor, and we were simply starving."

Brian laughed and, the gangway being lowered, followed her across, and for the first time in his life set foot on foreign soil.

She piloted him, with the confidence of an old traveler, through the perils and pitfalls of the Customs inspection; bought a dozen "*Ansichts-postkarten*" and as many stamps; dashed boldly round and sent a telegram—a feat which filled Brian's soul with unconcealed awe and respect; caught a small youth laden with a tray of weird-looking comestibles, whose harsh voice like a guttural foghorn was proclaiming something unintelligible in Dutch, and sent him hurrying with meekness—and in refreshing silence—toward a gloomy-looking Saal; and finally landed herself and her companion in the two inside corners of a very, very hot, though otherwise remarkably com-

fortable compartment of a corridor carriage—their bags and umbrella rolls in the rack above their heads, their rugs beside them, and their eyes meeting each other in amused self-congratulation. "Here we are!" she cried, with a long sigh of relief, "and just a minute for that musical youth to show his capabilities."

She was scribbling post-cards rapidly as she talked. "Wasn't his voice dreadful? He ought to be taken out and lost!—but not till we've had our breakfast."

Her high spirits were infectious. A sudden delightful sensation seized Wilbraham as of a schoolboy off to the seaside.

His years, his work, his past troubles, his fears for the future—dropped from his shoulders, softly, like Cinderella's rags. He only knew that life was good—good beyond all past guessing; that this new experience of going abroad, of Foreign Travel, was a revelation of wonder and delight (How had he got through life so long without going abroad? he asked himself) and that he was irresponsibly and unreasonably glad and happy.

"I'm only ten years old!" he informed her, with twinkling eyes, flinging his hat on the rack, as an appetizing odor invaded the compartment, and two steaming cups of coffee, on a basket of mysterious aspect, followed it, being launched through the window by the stunted youth, who clung to the door and then dropped in true, stolid, Dutch style, as the train moved from the station with so little fuss that one would have thought it was trying to get off unnoticed, after some shameful crime not yet discovered.

German trains have that air, even on the Prussian State Railway, and in lesser circumstances they slink in and out of stations with such cunning that if you are not actually sitting on the line to stop it you cannot be certain of catching your train at all. The life of a German train is a slow, persistent protest against its vocation—or what mere humans consider its vocation. It is a "passive resister," though less

effectually than our English ones of a different mold and order succeed in being.

They were really off. "I'm only ten years old!" he had informed her. "And I'm horribly hungry," he added, as they opened the basket and divided the spoil.

"Don't be greedy," she retorted, and they both laughed, as at a witticism of the most brilliant type.

The other occupant of the carriage, a fat German who was trying to sleep, rolled tightly into innumerable rugs and cloaks, turned, opened one eye at them, and scowled. (They had annoyed him dreadfully by insisting on having a window open.)

"I haven't asked you to breakfast yet," she proceeded, with a certain demureness of tone which belied the laugh in her eyes.

"Will you come to breakfast with me, Herr Knabe?" She paused, and Brian hesitated.

"But why?" he began. "Mayn't I—I mean, why should I be your guest?"

"Oh, do let me!" she cried, quickly and ungrammatically, with the prettiest pleading in her voice. "You know you had me to tea—no, supper—no, what was it?—with you last night; so do let me have the pleasure of returning the compliment. Won't you?"

"It is very good of you," he said, with embarrassed politeness and cursing himself for an awkward fool—just as he had done a thousand times, fifteen years ago, he reflected. Was this second childhood already?

"That's right," she nodded with satisfaction. "Besides, you know, you aren't old enough to order your own breakfast, at only ten! Who knows what unwholesome things you might not have chosen? You're years younger than you were yesterday, remember. It was an old, old man who 'treated' me," she added impertinently, and she laughed again.

"And after breakfast we'll first go to sleep for an hour—it's the wrong way round, of course, but never mind, we'll call this meal supper to make it right. I am really very sleepy still, and

I expect you are. And then, after that, if you like"—her eyes met his again (to think that for thirty years—well, no, twelve—since he came down from Oxford—he had scorned Foreign Travel!)"—"if you promise to be industrious I'll give you a German lesson."

Oh, but the nonsense they talked, and how they laughed at nothing—a pair of fools, surely? And how furious he was—or said he was—at having to pay two marks extra for the privilege of a seat.

"Do they mean us all to stand in the corridors?" he asked mildly at first. "But I've got my ticket," he expostulated half a second later, eying with suspicion the gorgeous official who was thus practising extortion and grunting, "Quick, quick!" in tones of patient exasperation. None but one of your mad English would so defy, or even seek to temporize with, the uniform of the Prussian State Railway. Germans love a uniform. The importance of it outweighs in their eyes all minor considerations, such as birth, rank, education. "What?" says the German (he or she). "Wears he a uniform?" and he (or she) falls down and says prayers to it, promptly. It is a perpetual surprise to Germans, and a source of constant irritation to their officials, that the English don't adopt this desirable attitude. But then the insolence and the arrogance of an Englishman—*Ach! Himmel!*

However, this Englishman handed over two marks while she explained to him that it was not a case of highway robbery, but merely a "cute dodge" on the part of certain authorities; and the official stared at "*die Braut*" (*doch, ja! gewiss!*) and perhaps reflected drearly that this sort of *Braut* was an English patent.

When the ceremony was ended they packed the remains of the breakfast and put it on the rack—(a few hours later the German rescued it from neglect and prevented its being wasted, but this does not really belong to the story); and she then proceeded to take off her hat and neatly line her corner

with a yesterday's paper secured by pins.

"I don't like putting my head on public cushions," she explained to Wilbraham; and then, tucking her rug round her and with a "good-night" nod and smile ("Don't wake me, *whatever* you do," she murmured lazily), she closed her eyes and in three minutes was asleep.

## V

BRIAN WILBRAHAM opened his bag very cautiously and took out the latest novel, yesterday's *Globe* and the *Church Times* (he did not shut the bag for fear it should snap).

He looked at the sleeper and then opened his book and remembered that he had hardly been able to put it away, so absorbing was it, when the boat train had reached Queenborough. What years ago that was! And yet he was younger. No wonder his friends had been saying to him for a long time, "Why don't you go abroad?" He found the place and tried to read. But Harrison's predicament had lost its enthralling interest; Kate, the heroine (by-the-bye, he did not know her name yet!), was an insipid fool; the situation was unreal; the style was commonplace; the whole book was rot; and he put it down and looked across the carriage.

She was sleeping like a child, her cheeks—on which lay long dark lashes—softly flushed; but the look of bright, buoyant youth was gone. Two little lines, like brackets, round the corners of her mouth, told of pain; faint purple shadows on her eyelids told of tears. Who was she? What was her story? Her right hand supported her head with its wealth of crisp, wavy hair; her left lay half-closed under the rug. The little turquoise brooch in her tie rose and fell in rhythmical rest, like a boat at anchor in a sun-kissed harbor.

A movement made Wilbraham glance round. The fat German was awake—wide awake—and was staring (staring!) with interest and approval at the same picture.



A throb of unreasoning fury caught the Englishman's breath. "What right had this boulder of a foreigner—what right had *anyone* else—to watch her while she slept, and surprise the pathetic secrets hinted by those sad little lines and shadows? It was confounded impertinence; it was insult; *what right* . . . what right had he himself? The hideous little voice of common sense struck like the voice of conscience on his inward ear. He muttered something very short (quite a lay word) under his breath. The fat German laughed—in a disgustingly fat way, Brian thought resentfully.

"*Die Dame ist ja sehr müde*," he remarked with sympathy.

The Englishman's native courtesy came, fortunately, to his aid and enabled him to repress a fervent desire to kick the other man. "I am afraid I don't understand German," he said stiffly, but remembered to speak in a low voice.

"So? Dee ladee is ti-erd, *nicht wahr?*"

"We had an unlucky journey." Brian's voice was not cordial.

"Ye-ez! I doo! It wors vair-ee ongom-vort-ar-ble—und *unangenehm*, ja! You go var?"

Wilbraham's British aversion to catechism, especially in personal matters—rose up in arms.

"Yes, some distance," he said shortly, and opened his book.

"It is *die Brautfahrt?*" pursued the inquirer, with a wink.

Brian stared his lack of comprehension and distaste for curiosity; he had practically refused once to say where they were going.

"No," he remarked with decision, and wondered where that town might be—before attacking "The Race Remorseless" with fresh determination. But it was no good—what fools these authors were! What did the fellow know of Life? *This* was Life! *This*, Foreign Travel; *this*—

He looked out of the window and watched—with eyes that saw not—the flat rectangular fields fly past, with their low mud dykes and stumpy little

correct trees, their stiff cows and wooden sheep, and the cardboard green lath dwellings—all so like those that belong to the farms we played with as children that they were quite appropriate to this wonderful sense of renewed youth—if Brian had but seen them; he watched the long straight roads that seemed to start outward from the line itself and stretched away into the flat, featureless distance with a relentless perspective that would depress even a Board-School genius; he watched the infrequent stations with their deserted, low platforms and generally locked-up appearance flit by, and here and there a solitary Dutchman in loose trousers, long blue overalls and round hat, trudging stolidly, stick in hand, in his enormous wooden shoes, along a lonely path; he watched it all, but all the time the only thing he saw was a tired woman's face set in its frame of chestnut hair against a background of the *Morning Post*.

"This is folly," he told himself irritably, as he realized that his thoughts were revolving round one centre.

"I needn't be so interested as all this; I don't even know her name! Besides, it's beginning to bore me. . . . I suppose it's the strain of last night's adventure. This is rot!" But another voice within him cried, "This is Life!"

And then she woke, suddenly—and found his eyes upon her; and her cheeks flamed. But she recovered herself in a moment.

"Oh!" she cried, sitting upright and putting her hands up to her hair, "was I snoring? Or had I my mouth open?"

He was able to reassure her on both points. "But I was wondering what you would say if I woke you," he told her gravely, "because in reading the paper behind you I came to your head, and couldn't get on unless you moved it."

"Do forgive me," she besought him, with much concern. "How very inconsiderate of me. Pray take the paper now."

But he made it plain that since she was awake he would sacrifice his

interest in her paper to her desire for conversation. The stoppage of the train at Goch and invasion of their compartment by an unruly horde of creatures, who shouted and grabbed at their belongings with hands of desecration, occurred at this moment.

Both travelers were glad of the opportunity to stretch their legs, and followed the ruffians into the large, draughty "Zollamt," where they had to find and claim their luggage from among the piles of boxes, trunks, bags, holdalls, baskets, etc., hastily flung on apparently interminable counters and as speedily cleared off again.

"How often is this game played?" he asked her when they were settling themselves again.

"That's all," she replied cheerfully. "Now, don't you want to smoke? Because the next carriage is undoubtedly a smoker."

"Not yet, really," he assured her, and then was annoyed with himself for the reason of his refusal—which simply was that it would have meant leaving her with the obnoxious German (poor, harmless, good old man!).

"Well, then, you shall have a German lesson," she continued. "Two hours before we get to Oberhausen! One can learn much in two hours." (The truth of this remark Brian had already discovered for himself.) He was quite ready for the lesson, he said; so they began, at first to their fellow-passenger's surly amusement. As it went on, however, he chuckled audibly, then laughed aloud—a hearty German laugh, than which no laugh on earth is more genuine or more infectious; finally roared, with frequent heavy ejaculations to let off steam, "*Ach, du lieber Himmel!*" "*Aber, nein!—diese Ver-rückten!*"

Only, as the lesson went on, it changed its character somewhat.

The true teacher does more than dwell merely on the A-B-C of verbs and tenses, of nouns and spelling. He (or she) knows that these may be but the threshold of a garden of pleasant paths and shady lawns, of quiet streams and deep pools, of radiant flowers and

far-reaching, heaven-bounded views, and into such a garden, through the gates of the guttural German speech, our travelers' feet were straying.

Apropos of *Die Stadt* (the town) he asked her about Gotha, and she told him she loved the little place, and described its cobbled streets, and steep hills crowned with the solemn old Schloss Friedenstein; its quaint buildings and red-tiled roofs, its Orangerie, its hedges of roses, and its distant views over rolling tracts of the vast Thüringen-Wald—region of magic and mystery, of wondrous legend and tragic truth.

She asked him why he was coming there, and he told her, and she exclaimed with pleasure, and supposed he would live in the chaplain's house above the church. And he explained that he was to sleep there and go for meals to the *pension* at the Sommer-Palais.

"Oh!" she cried, "but that's where I'm going—my German home!" and proceeded to tell him the story of the house, and to describe ("only I can't do them justice," she said) Fräulein Luise and Lotte Sandbach, who were the dearest and cleverest of women; and her face glowed, and she spoke so simply, so frankly, so charmingly, and she had such a fascinating trick of lifting one delicately penciled eyebrow as she talked, that Brian Wilbraham lost his way in the pleasant garden and loved her. And he did not even know her name!

## VI

It was at Oberhausen that the sun came out, just as they left the train, and it lit up that gloomiest of German stations right cheerily and lent a new color to the dingy woodwork and even some spirit to the melancholy porters.

Their fellow-traveler watched them regretfully as they left him alone, and came to the door to see the last of them.

"Adieu, Gnädigste," he murmured reverentially to the lady, and then to Brian, "Adieu, mein Herr, und gestat-

ten *Sie mir Ihnen zu gratulieren*" (allow me to congratulate you), he cried heartily.

The Englishman laughed and raised his hat as they moved off. "*Ja! ja!*" he cried, nodding amiably; "though I don't know what the old fellow was jawing about!" he said, turning to his companion; but the smile died on his lips as he saw her face.

It was white with amazement, sudden comprehension, dismay and perhaps something else. She drew a long breath and shivered.

Her eyes met his for a brief moment with such a look of pain, distress, despair in their clear depths that involuntarily he moved nearer to her.

"What is it!" he cried anxiously. "Aren't you well? Or was that fellow saying anything impertinent?" And he turned toward the already moving train as if he would stop it by main force.

"No, no," she stammered quickly. "It's nothing—nothing. It was only something—I thought I saw—for a moment. It's all right." She laughed nervously, trying to reassure him, and with a great effort regained her self-command.

"My nerves were a little shaken last night, I think," she said apologetically, "and so I'm upset by mere imagination. I'm not generally such a duffer."

The color came back to her face, as they moved on down the platform—but a keen and profound desire to help, protect, comfort her took possession of Wilbraham's soul.

"I'm a perfect fool!" she exclaimed after a few seconds. "Please forget my bad behavior!" and her tone was almost that of merry camaraderie to which he had grown accustomed.

"What was it I was going to say just now?" she went on. "Oh, I know! Here comes a difficulty, Herr Knabe," and she smiled. "We've nearly two hours to wait, and we'll have lunch, of course; but first, the luxury of Oberhausen is its *Waschzimmer*!—only, alas! be prepared!—there's only one of it! A *Waschzimmer* is a washing-

room; and now, I'm afraid, if you've arrived at any opinion of me, you'll be cruelly disillusioned—for the inherent selfishness of my character is going to display itself. In short—*Bags I first go!*"

"Of course," he hastily interrupted, laughing, and wondered why it was that the vulgarest slang should under certain circumstances so entirely lose every trace of vulgarity.

"When I'm really clean and presentable again you shall have your turn; and after that we'll lunch together?" She smiled with the last few words, questioningly.

He offered no objection to the plan, whatever his feelings might have been; but in justice to her it must be said that he did not look annoyed at the prospect of another chapter of their tête-à-tête. Meanwhile he carried her things for her to the door.

"We'll put all our *Gepäck* in here," she suggested. "It will leave us both freer, and this woman is a nice old thing. *Guten Morgen*," she added to the portly lady who opened the door to them and welcomed her with a beaming smile and a torrent of evil-sounding ejaculations.

"*Freut mich sehr die Gnädigste wieder zu sehen*," cried the good woman, as she locked the door again inside and proceeded to fetch fresh soap and towels and to turn hot water into one of the row of shining white basins.

"*Hoffentlich geht's der Gnädigsten gut?*" she chattered volubly on, while the Englishwoman picked up her dressing-case to unfasten it. As she did so her eye fell on her fellow-traveler's bag and the letters "B. W." caught her eye.

She stopped, amazed, and gasped.

"How very funny!" she exclaimed aloud, and then laughed. "*Nichts! nichts!*" in reply to the woman's query.

"Well!" to herself, "that explains the *Deutscher's* mistake—both bags with the same initials! B. W.! What is his name, I wonder? Bob? No. Benjamin? No! Bertram? Bertram! that's it! Bertram Weston? Wilton? Well! I wonder if he

noticed my initials? Thank goodness he doesn't understand German!"

And then, while she plunged her face into the water, listening with half an ear to the waiting-woman's string of questions, and supplying indiscriminate "ja's" and "nein's" and "so's" at suitable intervals, she told herself that she must think it all over thoroughly. Well, she had a clear hour for doing so, she thought, as she scrubbed at her cheeks with the towel and deepened the warm color on their soft curves.

If only the good soul would stop talking!

Her mind reverted to the incident of the cabin number; to the presentiment of danger which had prevented her undressing; to the crash that had awakened her; to the grave, serene face of the man who had met her in the corridor; to the belief of all that death was imminent; and to the extraordinary feeling which had come to her in those crucial moments when she and this man had walked to and fro on deck together, in the hush of that pause between forgotten life and expected death, that the heavy shackles of six weary years had suddenly fallen from her, and that she stood on the threshold of a land of liberty which stretched fair and glowing before her into the peace of limitless distance. . . . Then had come the cry of safety, and her spirit, which seemed to have started before her on its flight toward freedom, was caught back violently to earth and the old leaden sense of bondage.

What had she said, she wondered, in those few moments when her courage and self-control had deserted her! Anyhow, it didn't matter; she knew she had promised to explain something—which would mean telling him the story. Everyone knew it; naturally he should know it, too. But what no one knew—and what he would understand now, forever—was the weight of despair that shadowed her soul.

She had faced the world with such dauntless and unflinching courage, and such unconquerable joyousness and brightness ("I have been fairly

'game' about it," she put the matter to herself), that no one had ever guessed what it really meant to her. She had intended that no one should guess. At the very first she had determined that she would pay for her experiment without a "vulgar whining" at the price; that none of her friends should walk wearily, because she was tired of life; that no one of them should be saddened by the consciousness that she felt her youth was over.

Yet now he—a stranger—would know. Well, what did it matter? He was a man to trust entirely. More than this, she knew he was her friend.

The talkative attendant had gone to fetch something.

Barbara put down her brush and stood gazing in front of her, her inward eyes resting on the face of a tall, lean man in conventional clerical black Norfolds, a man who walked with his head thrown a little back, with the easy swing of athletic Oxford; a man whose courtesy was the unmistakable outcome of birth and breeding; a man whose long, spare, nervous hands and thin, almost ascetic face bore witness to no merely casual hours of self-sacrifice; whose firm jaws told of self-reliance, whose mouth betrayed sweet temper and keen sense of humor, and whose deep-set, dark gray eyes were windows through which a strong, pure soul shone steadily, as the fixed light in the distance had shone through the mist last night.

And something—something sent the light to her eyes and rich flames to her cheeks; her heart leapt, and she cried aloud in sudden exultation, "What does it matter? *He'll* understand! He is my friend!"

But she did not even know his name.

## VII

"You'll find me in the Warte-Saal, writing post-cards," Barbara said, when, much refreshed, she found Wilbraham staring at the bookstall and told him it was his turn to monopolize the *Waschzimmer*; and in the Warte-

Saal twenty minutes later he found her. She had ordered the lunch, according to previous arrangement, and an obsequious *Kellner* was hovering about in acute anxiety lest any of his fellows should forestall him and usurp the privilege of waiting on these "*Englische Herrschaften*"—for the lady he had often seen before and knew her to be (in the matter of *Trinkgeld*) exceptionally English, even for an *Engländerin*.

The moment "*Der Brautigam*" (*doch ja! gewiss!*) appeared he sprang forward, all bows and smiles and desire to know if the *Herrschaften* were ready to begin—to be, however, by a gesture, referred to the lady. What a topsy-turvy country must England be, doubtless thought the waiter, as he hurried off—a land where She gave the orders and led the way, and He—lord and master—followed like a little dog. Heinrich shook his head. "So would not I," was his thought. Yet, obviously, there were compensations.

Brian seated himself at the opposite side of the table and looked straight across at her.

"I've made a discovery," he began, without preamble.

"I wonder if you have, too? That my initials are the same as yours! Funny neither of us noticed it before this."

"Yes, I saw that, too. Isn't it amusing?" she said, looking up from her writing. "Both of us 'B. W.' Have you any other initial?"

"Yes, 'F,'" he told her. "Have you an 'F,' too?" He was privately trying to know what her initials stood for and wondering why he found it a sheer impossibility to ask.

"No, luckily!" she answered, smiling. "Mine's 'L'; so we shall be able to know ourselves apart! But what do your initials stand for? We never arrived at each other's names all these hours!"

"All these *hours*?" repeated Wilbraham. "All these *years*, you mean! It's a century, or very nearly, since last night."

"I'm sorry you've found the time so long," she observed demurely.

"I didn't mean that!" he cried indignantly. "You know I didn't." He was almost distressed, but caught her eye and laughed, too. "It's going abroad—every moment is so full! everything is so new! It's a whole feast of experience——"

She nodded. "There's nothing like it," she said. "Especially if you aren't blasé with frequent runs across to the Continent. But what is your name, Herr Knabe?"

An impulse, quite in keeping with his profession of small-boyhood, prompted Brian to parley, while Heinrich set before them dishes of "*Hammelskoteletten*" and "*Gemüse*," and other more strictly German foods.

"What is yours?" he asked her, with a pretense of teasing. "Ladies first."

"Certainly not," she declared. "You tell me yours first, and I'll tell mine afterwards."

It is very extraordinary that there are few things in this world more difficult than to acknowledge and pronounce one's own name! Why should it be so? Why should one feel acutely self-conscious and idiotic at answering such a simple question as "Who are you?" Yet an unreasonable shyness in this matter is one of the "childish things" most of us are incapable of "putting away."

He told her his name, when she insisted, and she stared at him and said "What?" so he had to repeat it, a more nervous and foolish performance still, and then found himself spelling it and apologizing for it.

"I don't wonder you didn't catch it," he added. "It's an ugly name, and uncommon. I believe no other family but ours bears it, and there are very few of us left."

"I've heard it before," she said slowly. She was looking down at her plate and rolling bits of *Brötchen* into hard pellets; while thoughts raced through her mind and the problem before her assumed an aspect more bewildering. But some decision had to be arrived at, and at once.



"Do you belong to the Southshire Wilbrahams?" she inquired carelessly.

"Yes!" he cried, with some surprise. "Do you know any of them? But of course you do! The world has shrunk till introductions have become almost obsolete machinery. Everybody knows everybody else in the same class. Which——?"

She interrupted him. "I did once—years ago," she replied indifferently, her eyes still lowered; "but very slightly. Yes, it is an uncommon name; and strange, isn't it, how some names die out while others have a perfect scourge in the land? Jones, for instance!" She looked up now, laughing. "A cousin of mine was at a school for 'Clergy sons only,' and there were fourteen Joneses—think of it! Tim said that if a master inadvertently called out 'Jones,' without that Jones's distinguishing suffix—'Major,' or whatever it was, half the school used to reply 'Yessir.' And you can't indulge in variations with Jones. Smith, now, may be made quite—quite genteel in the opinion of those bearing the name who spell it 'Smyth,' or 'Smithe,' or even 'Smyth,' and Brown is equally accommodating. While Jones! But are you getting enough to eat? I'm not! That comes of talking. We'll stodge steadily for five minutes now, and I'll finish my post-cards instead of jabbering!"

"But you haven't——"

"Hush!" she interrupted peremptorily, yet with a look so charming that the word seemed a royal behest. "We've talked too much!" This was so obviously unfair that he almost told her so, but instead fell to wondering about her acquaintance with his family, and watching the curve of her cheek.

In the silence that followed, while she scribbled vigorously between mouthfuls of lunch, snatches of the waiters' conversation floated across the Warte-Saal, and Brian caught again the word "*Brautfahrt*," accompanied by an unmistakable nod in their direction.

He looked up and found her eyes fixed on him with an expression he

could not fathom; it held something of inquiry, of comprehension, amusement, perhaps a little anxiety.

"Why does everyone suppose we're going to Brautfahrt?" he asked her.

"Where is Brautfahrt?"

She hesitated an instant.

During the last five minutes her mind had been hurriedly working out a new problem—an unimportant one, it would appear to an onlooker, though to Barbara herself it seemed fraught with gigantic issues. Should she reveal her identity here and now? "Or shall I enjoy the rest of the journey as we are?" she asked herself.

Somehow she felt that the truth once told would upset this delightfully easy *bon camarade* relationship and infuse an element of constraint, raising between them the prickly hedge of conventional formality.

"If I tell him, I must explain; and if I explain, we shall be either acknowledged friends—or less friends than we are!" Was it not too soon to admit the former possibility? Was it not also too late—far too late—for her to face the latter?

"I will wait," she decided; and as she came to the decision she caught the *Kellner's* word and nod, and Brian asked her to explain them.

She hesitated, but only an instant, and then a gleam of fun came into her eyes.

"It's a Sunday-school treat!" she said easily, "a harmless joke!" And then she leaned back in her chair and went off into a peal of laughter.

"You do look so disgusted!" she cried. "Never mind! They don't mean to be cheeky! It shows how well-behaved I am!—the good little scholar!" She laughed again with wicked enjoyment of the joke, her depraved conscience evidently allowing the lie to pass unreprieved.

Brian laughed, too—a little. It did not seem to him much of a joke, and he had an uneasy suspicion, which he strangled almost as it arose, that she was what is popularly called "having him on."

She in her soul was wondering why

she had found the word "honey-moon" simply unpronounceable. Never mind, some day she would confess—when she knew him better—at least, if he ever remembered and asked her why she lied. And she would tell him her story between Cassel and Eisenach.

"Have you finished writing post-cards?" asked Wilbraham at this moment.

"I have," she replied unwarily. "But why?"

"Then I insist on your revealing your name! If you don't, I shall know for certain what I have for some time suspected—" He paused dramatically, and the color flew to her cheeks. "That you are a royalty traveling incognito!" he finished in an impressive stage whisper.

She looked relieved.

"Or a millionairess," she suggested, "who takes such an interest in the hard-worked parson that she promptly disinherits her godson and makes you heir to her pickle factory and fortune?"

"That would certainly do as well," replied Brian gravely, "or better, perhaps. But you shall not evade keeping your promise like this. It's unkind. My curiosity at any time is almost beyond control, and in such a case as this I fear the suspense will do me some serious mental injury. Besides, from a moral point of view—as your parish priest *pro tem*.—I ask you, is it right to delay keeping your word—and thereby to add to my worries and responsibilities?"

"Since you put it on that ground—" she began, laughing, and then the smile left her face and she paused. "Listen." She weighed her pencil carefully on one finger, and looked at the miniature seesaw with a frown of anxiety. "I'm not going to tell you my name till we get past Hagen." She hesitated. "I'm connected with a story that all the world knows"—her face grew more troubled—"and when I tell you who I am I want to tell you that story—from my point of view. But not yet. Don't you think this journey is rather

fun?" Her voice was wistful. "So let us stay children and enjoy it a little longer. When we get to Cassel we'll be grown-up again."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Brian, instinctively laying his hand across the table, and as instinctively she put hers into it. "I didn't know—I am so sorry—" His fingers closed round hers, and the warm, firm clasp sent his message of sympathy straight to her heart.

"How should you? You've nothing to be sorry for." She smiled, though rather sadly. "When I tell you you'll understand—I *know* you'll understand."

Her eyes shining with two unshed tears met his, dark with concern, and they both knew that he would understand.

## VIII

It was five hours later, and they were in the train between Hagen and Cassel when Barbara discovered that she had lost her locket.

They had frivoleed ("disgracefully," she told Brian) for some time, and then their talk had drifted into deeper channels—Music, Art, Nature, Religion—one leading into the other, till they found themselves floating in the frail boat of Friendship down the broad River of Truth which flows into perilous seas.

How many have trusted themselves serenely in that treacherous boat, and set sail for far lands of Pleasure, to drift unwittingly into the Ocean of Love and there find shipwreck. Some few—a very few—have, it is true, gained ultimately the Green Isles of Happiness; others have been lost forever; while most, if they have the pluck and patience to fight through those stormy waters, may succeed in reaching shore, but with the loss of Youth and Hope, Trust and Peace—life's purest treasures—and clad in naught but the chilly garment of Memory, only to find that it is not to the Land of their Desire that their tired souls have won—but to the bare, bleak coast of Content.

Our travelers had found a mutual acquaintance in an old schoolfellow of his who had married a friend of hers.

"No, I haven't seen him," said Barbara, "only his photograph. She used to wear it in a locket like this—" Her hand went up to her throat and fell again empty. She sprang up with startled eyes.

"The locket's gone!" she cried, and began to search hurriedly among her wraps.

"What's it like?" Brian asked her, helping her to shake out a rug. They had the carriage to themselves.

"About as large as a halfpenny—round—a gold one. It has 'H' on one side in pearls. I *must* find it."

"Where did you have it last?"

"At Oberhausen. Of course! I took it off when I was doing my hair. I must have left it there. How stupid of me! I'll wire to the woman." She was evidently much disturbed by the incident, and Wilbraham could only offer his sympathy and make fresh and energetic searches again and again among the carriage cushions.

"Sit still!" she said at last with some amusement. "I'm ashamed to give you so much trouble. A friend's going to meet me at Eisenach, and I'll get her to wire to Oberhausen. It'll be all right." Wilbraham had barely time for an unreasonable qualm of jealousy at the idea of the friend disturbing them, before she spoke again.

"She's a Gotha friend," Barbara said, smiling at him, "and such a jolly girl—or was. I haven't seen her since her wedding last year. They were married in the old Margarethen Kirche, and you've no idea what a dreadful ceremony a German wedding is!"

She looked out of the window at a waterfall that flashed by.

"How?" he inquired mechanically. He was watching the way her lips moved, and the lights changing in her clear eyes as they met the golden rays of a September sun.

"Why, the length of it!" she exclaimed. "And the breadth of it! And oh, the ugliness! Imagine ten or twelve bridesmaids in ordinary evening

dress—broad daylight—and individual taste freely exploited! You may get an orangey girl next to one in crimson, or a pale pink dress beside a mustard-and-black lace! And they all form a semicircle (with a groomsman apiece) round the wretched couple, who have to stand for three-quarters of an hour or more listening to words of wisdom! At Greta's wedding (my friend) the pastor addressed her and Paul by name, and she sobbed the whole time. A German bride must cry to do her part correctly. I always say it's very lucky the Germans are such a sentimental nation, for a Briton—man or woman—would have to care very badly for anyone before consenting to undergo such an ordeal."

"Do you suppose, though," said Brian, "that any man or woman would mind a little bit *what* the ordeal might be that was to give them to each other—if they really cared?" His voice was very quiet and his eyes were fixed on her as she sat gazing out in the sunshine.

"Perhaps not," she acquiesced gently. "No, I suppose they wouldn't."

The train dashed into a deep cutting through a forest of pines, and in the carriage the warm light turned to a chilly dusk.

"Years ago," Wilbraham said, speaking in an altered voice, "I cared tremendously for a girl—we were engaged for ten months—I know in all that time I would have joyfully faced any ordeal that gave that girl to me—"

The girl opposite him shivered unconsciously, and he leaned forward and pushed her rug closer round her.

"I don't think," he smiled whimsically, "that even a German wedding would have frightened me off; and when the whole thing smashed up I would have undergone any ordeal to have her back."

"What happened?" asked Barbara, and her voice was very low.

"She threw me over. It never had been really me. There was another fellow, but some misunderstanding had come between them and she took me

out of hurt pride. Then a mere chance—or what one calls a mere chance—set it all right again."

"Or all wrong—for you?" she suggested, her eyes still on the flying gravel banks without.

"I thought so at first," he replied, "but I got over it. Oh, I got over it all right. I made up my mind I would, and I've been thankful for a long while that it ended as it did. You know those lines:

"Ah, who am I that God hath saved  
Me from the doom I did desire,  
And crossed the lot myself had craved"—

"You know them, don't you?" He paused and she turned from the window and looked straight into his eyes.

"Then you didn't really love her!" she said decisively.

"Didn't I? I thought I did!"

"You like quotations; here's one:

"Pray, how comes Love?  
It comes unsought, unsent;  
Pray, how goes Love?  
*That was not Love that went!*"

Her big hat shaded her face in the dim light, and he could not see her plainly.

"I think that's true," he said slowly. "At any rate I've been thankful that it went; and more than ever thankful, today," he added almost unconsciously, still with his eyes on hers.

The train dashed out into the open again and the last few moments had flooded the sky with a splendor of color, amethyst and opal, deep crimson and palest pink, which threw a strange glow upon her face.

"That was not Love!" she said as if in a trance; and her voice was to Wilbraham like the music of Truth articulate. The Word was spoken; and again they stood together, alone, on the brink of the Unknown—on the narrow borderland that separates existence from Life. The world was far from them, all things were forgotten; and Time itself seemed to stand still and listen as if for the stroke of suspended fate.

"That was not Love!" she repeated again, and Wilbraham leaned a little forward, his breath coming quickly.

"Then what *is* Love?" he asked her. There was a breathless silence, and Barbara's voice fell across it softly, as a bar of moonlight falls across a Summer sea.

"I don't know," she murmured dreamily. "I have never known."

Wilbraham caught his breath suddenly, and into his eyes, still holding hers, came the Look that lights the world. His hand fell gently on the slender brown one resting on her knee. His heart hammered; and an irresistible, soul-subduing force seized him and impelled words which came in a whisper, as if from a long way off.

"I think I could teach you," he said, and his voice shook. "Dear, I believe we could learn it—together."

For one moment the light leaped into her eyes to meet that in his own—one brief moment. Then she shrank back, quivering from head to foot, her face white and drawn, while a cry broke from her that struck his heart like a lash.

She gazed at him with wide, frightened eyes.

"I am married!" she said hoarsely—and stopped. It was true. His fingers had closed over a wedding-ring.

## IX

His fingers had closed over her wedding-ring just as the train drew up in Cassel station. She took her hand gently away. The carriage door was flung open and in bundled four German ladies with the endless impedimenta that is a German woman's normal equipment.

Two were chattering volubly. A third felt ill and must have the seat cleared to put her feet up, though the space for six was decidedly limited.

"You had better find a smoker," said Barbara, lifting her eyes to his. She wondered why her voice sounded so funny and if he noticed it, though she was the least self-conscious of

women. He nodded silently and picked up his rug.

"We stop at Eisenach, don't we?" he asked her, without looking at her. "I'll leave my bag on the rack here till then." He stepped out on the platform and turned to her. She looked desperately white and tired, and a wave of tumultuous feeling swept over him. He paused.

"I'll get you some tea," he remarked levelly, and disappeared.

"They had only coffee," he told her, returning with a cup. His hand shook as he gave it her, and hers as she took it.

"How did you manage to ask for it?" she began, trying to smile. "You're a promising pupil—" She stopped abruptly, and Brian tried to swallow something that threatened to choke him.

"I'd better get hold of a seat," he said hurriedly. "You're sure you're all right now?" He looked persistently at the platform, and tried to keep his voice unconcerned. "Quite," she answered steadily; and then he was gone.

Barbara buried her face in her hands and bowed her head. She did not cry. She could not think. She was only conscious of an overpowering exhaustion. Her whole being ached with a sense of numb despair, and she felt as if she were dying. Life itself seemed to have suddenly deserted her and left her utterly helpless, nerveless, heartless.

"I don't mind," she told herself, again and again. "I don't care a bit. I'm just absolutely tired out, and it will all be over soon. . . . It is all over. . . . This is dying. . . . There is no me. . . . There is no God. . . . There is nothing. . . . There is no—" and at that unthought word the vision came before her eyes of his face as he had looked at her, and the sound to her heart of his voice as he had called her "Dear!" She heard it again, and at its echo Passion and Pain awoke; Passion—pure, dominating and enthralling, to enfold her in a mighty joy and longing; Pain—keen,

piercing, penetrating, to sting her, spirit, soul and body, till relief came in a flood of tears.

Wilbraham leaned back in his corner of the *Rauchcoupé* with his eyes closed, unconscious alike of the babble of voices round him and of the vile atmosphere. He was worn out with the bad night on the top of a long spell of hard work, with the varied experiences of this wonderful day, and with the overwhelming feeling that had taken possession of him.

"What is Love?" he had asked her. Now he knew. At last he knew. It seemed to him that he had not even remotely known before, so far did this new passion transcend the old. This was not merely heart-hunger, but the imperious cry of his whole being—the voices of spirit, soul and body blending in one thrilling discord his need of completion.

And she had taught him—this friend of a day—or of a lifetime? Yet at what cost to herself! His heart was wrung at the thought of her, though he only dimly guessed the depth of the pain their friendship had roused in her.

"And at least," he thought, "she has not *this* to bear. Thank God for that." Yet beneath the thankfulness his man's heart cried out in rebellion against the knowledge that it must be so. "And we can still be friends," he told himself. Indeed, how was it possible that they should be less to each other? He knew that they were friends; he knew it.

"Past all doubting, truly  
A knowledge greater than grief can dim."

"And my love cannot hurt her. I need never show it. We shall be just as we have been all today. She shall think I have forgotten all but the friendship—and in that I may be able to help her somehow."

But where was her husband? Who was he? What was the story? And how was it that he had never noticed the ring, the telltale ring, before? Perhaps because his eyes had hardly left her face, with its laughing eyes and



tender mouth and the gracious curves of her fresh young cheeks. . . .

So his thoughts ran on in a chaotic whirl of love, grief, wonder, anxiety—till from sheer fatigue he fell asleep.

He was wakened by the bursting open of his carriage door, the shouting of porters and the glare of station-lights.

"Eisenach!" he thought, springing up and seizing his rug and book.

But it was Gotha; and as he alighted on the platform he was accosted by a manservant in livery, who already, to his surprise, held his bag, and a moment later by a tall, matronly woman who came up with a beaming smile of welcome, her kind eyes and whole aspect betokening cheerfulness and exuberance of good-will.

"Well, Mr. Wilbraham!" she exclaimed, shaking his hand warmly and speaking excellent English with a slight German accent, round and crisp.

"Many, ma-ny welcomes to our little town! I am Fräulein Luise Sandbach. I always meet my guests; Franz, our *Hausdiener*, will take your luggage. But way-er is Mrs. Wilbraham?"

Brian stared for a moment, slightly puzzled, and then, "I'm afraid there isn't such a person," he told her, with the smile that had endeared him to many middle-aged ladies.

"What! No, no! I do not mean a wife!" Fräulein Sandbach laughed with delightful heartiness.

"But eess Mrs. Wil-bra-ham no relation to you, then? And haf you not met herr? She arrifes by this train. I thought you would sure-lee travel together."

Startled comprehension dawned in Wilbraham's eyes.

"I have traveled—as far as Cassel—with a lady coming here," he answered doubtfully; "but I didn't know her name. Certainly she is no relation. Tall, and very bright? Is she Mrs. Wilbraham?"

"You deet not know her? Well, it eess too strange!" cried Fräulein Luise in amazement, and turned, as she

spoke, at the liveried man's respectful interruption. He spoke in German and handed her a note. "Ach?" She raised her eyebrows and threw back her head, and then nodded a very emphatic, "So!"

"She has left the train at Eisenach, Franz tells me," she explained to Brian. "But she gave the guard your bag and a note for me." With a smile of apology she unfolded a twist of paper and, glancing at it first, handed it to him.

"But what adventure then was this?" she demanded with eager interest.

"LIEBSTES PFLEGE-MUTTERCHEN [ran the note]:

"Greta Schultz has met me at Eisenach and insists on my spending the night with her, so I shall come on tomorrow afternoon. I would have wired to you, but knew you would be coming down to meet the chaplain. He will tell you of our adventure on the boat. It has rather undone me, so I am glad to rest a little earlier.

"My love, "BARBARA."

"I wonder why she has written in English," observed Fräulein Luise. "But the adventure, Mr. Wilbraham? Please tell me!"

Silently Brian handed back the note. The scene in the train came back to him with vivid reality. And her name was Barbara! He felt he had known it all along. Barbara!—but *Wilbraham!*

They had left the *Bahnhof* and were walking briskly down the dimly lighted *Strasse*, where roses heavily scented the soft night air. He pulled himself together and told her in a few words—amid many sympathetic exclamations of interest, horror and pity, from the warm-hearted lady—the story of the previous night's crossing.

"Poor child!" she murmured tenderly, "she has enough of trouble, yet always fresh ones appearing! And that is how you became acquainted? So! But you nev-verr found out herr name. Vair-ree strange! And we all in the *pension* have thought you must be her brother-in-law, *oder so etwas*—yet you nev-verr knew her?"

"Not till last night," repeated Brian, almost irritably for him.

"And way-err you not charmed?"

she proceeded, still with that exuberance of kindness in voice and expression. He replied without enthusiasm that he thought her very nice indeed, and Fräulein Luise was disappointed and insensibly rebuffed. She turned the conversation to the chaplaincy, the pension and its present guests; and thus chatting they arrived at the old Sommer-Palais.

## X

"YOUR sup-perr is ready," Fräulein Luise told Wilbraham, as they mounted the broad, shallow stairs of the quaint old house. At the top of the first flight they turned into an anteroom on the left, out of which a glass door led on to a balcony where the red ends of two cigars glimmered in the dark and whence proceeded the sound of merry chatter. One of the red cigar-ends moved forward and a tall, fair young man appeared behind it in the doorway.

"Hullo, Babs!" he cried, removing the cigar. "What! hasn't she come? Oh, I say, what rot! What's become of her?"

"She has *not* come, my dear fel-low," returned the genial Fräulein Sandbach. "She stays till tomorrow with Frau Schultz. But here is Mr. Wilbraham, and *no* relation to Barbara! Come out, Mr. Harold Neilson, and be introduced. This is a future diplomatist, Mr. Wilbraham, but he has much to lairrn! A fatal candor is his besetting sin; *nicht wahr*, Harold?" she added teasingly. "And diplomacy is but a polite name for deceit! Who else is thay-er?"

The party of five moved forward into the light—the others being three girls of different types of attractiveness (or otherwise) and another man, small, sleek and dark, who bowed low on being introduced as Monsieur Ménégos.

They all eyed the stranger with friendly curiosity, as, after the brief ceremony, Fräulein Luise hustled him on into the long dining-room.

"But where's Mrs. Will?" plaintively inquired one of the girls, linking her arm in that of the elder lady.

"She comes tomorrow. Frau Schultz has kept her at Cassel, the thief!"

"Beastly swizzle," grumbled the young man, strolling in behind Brian.

Fräulein Luise looked round and promptly dismissed him with a peremptory, "Go, Harold, my dear boy, and find my sister! . . . You English like to eat your sup-pairr without onlookers! I have learnt it *vair-ree* well!" She nodded, laughing, to Brian.

Miss Alport, a black-haired, languid, sleepy-eyed maiden who evidently intended to remain and see more of the newcomer, seated herself unostentatiously by the window, but not for long.

"What is he doing in the salon, Daisy?" she was asked rapidly, in German.

"I don't know," responded the girl indifferently, evidently trusting to luck to be allowed to stay.

"Then go quickly and find out!" commanded Fräulein Luise with an air which, though friendly, none could gainsay.

"And I will have no one here till ti-erd Mr. Wilbraham has had his supper. *Schnell!*"

The girl writhed up from her seat, threw a languid smile at Brian, who was not looking at her, and flopped lazily down the room.

"She is my pet hor-rurr!" muttered Fräulein Luise to Brian as the door closed behind Miss Alport.

"But you will see—tomorrow!" she nodded wisely and confidentially, and laughed.

"She cannot bay-er my dear little Barbara, because she and Harold are such friends! But ach!—you will see—! It eess too funny!"

Something clutched at Brian's heart. *She and Harold are such friends . . .*

At that moment Fräulein Lotte came in, a flutter of welcome, eager, pretty, vivacious, holding out both hands as if she had known him for years. She was younger than her sister—smaller, quicker—equally charming, though in a different way.

"How do you do, Mr. Wilbraham?"

she cried with much expressive play of feature. "Do you speak German?"

He shook his head, smiling, and sat down again to his supper. Already he felt better.

"I must learn!" he said.

"You shall learn here *vair-ree* quickly," responded Fräulein Lotte encouragingly.

"My sister is the housekeeper, and I am the teacher! She looks after the material advancement of our guests, and I the mental—*Sol!*" she nodded, showing her white teeth pleasantly. "I shall speak German always with you, if you like."

"That is good of you," he answered cordially. "I have had one German lesson, and I am hoping my teacher will not give me up as a bad job; but I'm hopelessly ignorant!" he added, with smiling self-depreciation.

"*Ach!* that was with Barbara—with Mrs. Wilbraham?" rejoined the two delightedly, and Luise proceeded to give her sister a rapid history, as she knew it, of the acquaintance between the two.

"And were you not enchanted with Mrs. Wilbraham?" cried Lotte enthusiastically, as the elder Fräulein Sandbach left the room to look after her guests "*im salon.*"

"She is our great pet. She is always so charming, so delightful."

"You have known her a long time?" inquired Brian carelessly, succumbing to temptation, and appearing to manifest a keen interest in his supper.

"Eight ye-ars!" Fräulein Lotte was only too ready to enlarge on the theme so near her heart. "She came to us first a young girl of sixteen, to study German and music *und so weiter* for one ye-ar and a half. *Ach!* the wildest, merriest, best girl she was! Then her father died, a colonel *re-ti-erd* . . . You do not know the sad story?"

Brian shook his head.

"But perhaps—" he began.

"*Ach, nein!* You would say she may not wish you to know. All the world knows. It cess best to understand. Herr motherr married again, at once, to the dear child's grief and horrurr.

Her mother is a little *Schmetterling*—butterfly, no heart! The stepfather, he say, 'Barbara shall come with us to Egypt,' and she must go. A horrid man! he play high; he drinks; he swears; he flairrts; yet *called* a gentleman! *So war's doch zu schlimm für* Barbara; she was *vair-ree* unhappy. She wrote to us and said, 'I will marry the first nice man who shall ask me.'

"There came two, and she said no. Then came there a Major Wilbraham—What! you know him?"

"Yes—no—" he cried hastily. "Go on!"

"This man propose—and she refuse him. Her mother was *vair-ree* angry, for Major Wilbraham was rich—oh, very rich! She had a great scene with Barbara and in came the major. So kind! He took her part, Barbara's, and she, poor child, so grateful, so lonely, *she took him!* Then came the wedding, quite quiet out there in Egypt. Her mother hurried—no, *flew* it on.

"Barbara was just eighteen; she notice for some days his manner sometimes too strange. '*Ach!*' say her mother, 'he is off his head with joy to marry you. Men are always so.'

"Barbara said nosing more. After the *serr-vee*, as they walked down the church, I do not know what happened, but a friend rushed up and held him, the bridegroom. He was *quite mad*—and they took him away and so has he been ever zince, shut up in an asylum."

Wilbraham's face was very pale and set.

"She—?" he began, but his lips refused another word.

"She was gr-rand!" cried Fräulein Lotte warmly, with tears of devotion in her eyes and voice. "Her mother hat known it was possible, but *ach!* she has no soul! He was rich; Barbara was in her way. It would therefore do nice-ly. She say to Barbara, 'My dear child, be thankful. You have all the advantage of being married, and no drawbacks.'

"Think—a mother to speak so! So Barbara gave her up. She spends one

week each year with her, that's all. She has then traveled much—Africa, India, America. Then two years she has come back to us from September *bis nach Weihnachten*. She works in the atelier with Herr Baumgartner, the artist. She plays and sings, and does so much, *al-ways* so bright, so brave! and *ev-vairree-one* loves her. You *must* like her, Mr. Wilbraham! She is a dear, so good."

Words failed Wilbraham. He tried to speak, but was too overwhelmed. Not that the story was new to him; but that she should be the heroine! The affair had taken place just at the time of his own engagement, and after a passing feeling of sympathy for the bride who was reported to have vanished into obscurity, accepting only £400 a year out of her husband's thousands, he had forgotten it almost entirely. Major Wilbraham was only a second cousin and Brian merely heard casually from time to time that he was no better—indeed, could never regain his reason, though he might live for another forty years.

He sat transfixed with the throng of thoughts and emotions which the story aroused in him; and Fräulein Lotte was well content that she had awakened his interest and sympathy.

"*Armes Kind!*" she sighed very tenderly; and Brian, from the depths of a wrung heart, echoed involuntarily, "Poor child! poor child!"

And he forgot to admit that after all he was related to Mrs. Wilbraham.

## XI

"*CARE* to come round the town and explore a bit?" suggested the young man called Harold, as he and Brian lighted their pipes on the balcony after breakfast the following morning.

He would have liked it, Brian told him, but felt he must get his unpacking done. He had been too tired to settle into his quarters the night before, and he had two letters to write and an article for a paper to finish by early post.

He looked at his watch. It was nine o'clock.

"I could come at twelve, if that suits you?" he said.

"Right! I suppose I ought to be working, too," replied Neilson dismally. "What a rotten thing it is to have a conscience!"

"That iss not a complaint you suffer from, my dear fellow!" cried Fräulein Luise, joining them. "How much work did you do yesterday? None! 'Because Barbara was coming.' How much work the day before? None. 'Because you must practise the song for Barbara.' How much work before that? 'You must write to Barbara.' How much today? None, I fear, 'because you must meet Barbara.' Tomorrow? 'You must see what Barbara will do.' *Al-ways* no work! and *al-ways* Barbara!" She laughed heartily in enjoyment of her own words and Harold's discomfiture.

He grew very red, looked as if uncertain whether to be angry or pleased, annoyed or amused, shuffled from one foot to another and finally seized her by the arms and administered a gentle shaking.

"*You're* a bully, Fräulein Luischen!" he exclaimed reproachfully, "and, besides, you're jolly unfair! I've done no end of work the last ten days. I've read far ahead of what old Weber set me."

"And why, then?" asked the laughing and merciless tease. "Because Barbara will say, 'What have you done?' or to make more time with her when she come. *Ach!*" and she shook her finger at him. "You ba-bee!" she cried.

Harold let go of her arms.

"Oh, stow it!" he muttered, half-laughing and half-irritated. "I sha'n't argue with you. Women have no logic!" and he thrust his hands into his pockets and bolted into the garden, to be followed by her parting shot, "Except Barbara?"

Brian meanwhile had been undergoing that uncomfortable mental process which corresponds to the drawing of a physical tooth. He had wakened

early that morning to what seemed to him a sane and healthy view of the drama in which Fate had given him so suddenly a part.

He had sketched out for himself a plan of the six weeks before him, in which he and Barbara were to lead a peaceful, joy-filled life, working together (he would have German lessons every day), walking together, all on those delightfully easy terms of unconscious and careless friendliness which had been the keynote of yesterday's intercourse. No word or look or even thought of anything deeper should mar the serenity and satisfaction of the daily life they were for this brief time to share.

He would ignore that sunset hour so completely that she should forget it, too, utterly, with the pain it brought her. He had pictured Barbara and himself alone together, the only two "early birds" at the eight-o'clock breakfast. Then he would walk with her to the atelier, where (they said) she worked from nine to twelve, and would get his own writing done while she was at work. Perhaps she would let him play her accompaniments when she sang. At dinner—the midday meal—he should sit near her; of course, he could not expect her entirely to himself then. In the afternoon she should take him cycling or walking to her favorite haunts. After tea perhaps he would sit and read while she practised in the great salon—and certainly he should not leave the gay party who assembled there after supper for his dark, quaint little flat over the church until Barbara had gone to bed.

For six—short—weeks!

This dream, humble enough as it seemed to him who was, perforce, giving up a dream dearer still, was rudely shattered by the banter he had just listened to, and he was forced to see things under a new aspect, in the cold, relentless daylight of common sense.

These people were her old friends—friends of years—who had doubtless stood by her through all her days of bitterness, who knew her every look and word, who were part and parcel of

her daily life here. This was "her German home"—he was a stranger, a bird of passage, an interloper.

"Fool!" he told himself furiously. "Fool!" while aloud he said something vaguely about unpacking and seeing *Fräulein Luise* again at dinner, and then followed Neilson into the garden, striding eagerly up the little path through the trees, into the park, and round to the church.

*Fräulein Luise* stood a moment on the balcony and pondered. She was, after all, a woman.

"Nice fellows!" she murmured to herself, and then clenched her hands and shook her fist at an imaginary foe.

"I wish that—beast—was—dead!" she muttered, with the emphasis of a curse. "The poor little one!" and she moved off to order dinner.

Wilbraham finished his pipe in the privacy of the little study. It took all his philosophy, and all his Christianity—and both were genuine—to enable him to adjust himself to the circumstances for which his plans had *not* provided; and at last, feeling in desperate need of diversion for his thoughts, he sat down and finished off the letters and article and did them up for post. This done, he lighted another pipe and proceeded to his bedroom to unpack, pulling the contents out of his Gladstone and throwing them one by one on the bed.

As he did so, he heard a click as of something metal falling and then rolling away.

"Hope that's not a sovereign!" he thought, and went down on his hands and knees to search.

The glimmer of gold in a dark corner under an old-fashioned "press" caught his eyes, and he fished for it blindly with a walking-stick, till, red in the face and tumbled of hair, he brought to light a small gold locket.

Wilbraham picked it up and carried it in amazement to the windows. Barbara's locket, undoubtedly!

But how the dickens did it get into his bag? Suddenly an explanation flashed upon him—the true one, as it



happened. Both the bags were marked "B. W." The waiting-woman must have found it after Barbara left, and her bag being probably locked had dropped the locket into his, which was open.

He remembered her saying something to him as he left the *Waschzimmer*, but, knowing no German, he had taken her words for a friendly farewell!

He turned the locket over again. It was certainly hers, with an "H" on one side in tiny pearls; and as he did so, it suddenly flew open and disclosed in one half a miniature of the young man called Neilson, and in the other a curl of fair hair.

What Wilbraham went through in the two hours that followed no one ever knew. The fiercest, bitterest struggle of his life—when not only the world, the flesh and the devil, but all that was best in him of faith and hope and truth, seemed leagued together in an almost irresistible determination to damn him utterly and forever—was fought out in that tiny room over the English church at Gotha; and at the close of the conflict he came out, victor indeed, but pale, stern, exhausted, looking ten years older, to answer the cheery knock and call of the man whose likeness Barbara wore in a locket.

"Coming!" he called, and if his voice had lost its ring there was no one there who knew it.

He put the locket safely into his writing-case, locked it, and clattered down the uncarpeted stairs, whistling.

## XII

WHEN Barbara Wilbraham stepped out of the train at Gotha station on Wednesday night she had made up her mind on two points.

The first was that she would see as little of Brian as possible; and this would be a fairly simple matter to arrange, for she was at present intending to work exceptionally hard in the atelier, where she was doing a large painting, and her time when not there

was fully occupied in music and in long walks or rides during the afternoon with one friend or another.

"Besides," she told herself, "he won't want to see much of me. He will have heard all about me by this time. I wonder what he thinks." The thought came drearily. "He'll probably suppose it was the major's money. Will he make our relationship public? . . . Did he really care yesterday? Does he still care? . . . Oh, wicked me, when I am married! . . . Anyway, he will see the necessity of avoiding another man's wife. Only I *must* be the same as before—jokey and jolly . . . God!—help me!" And her soliloquy ended in passionate prayer.

The second decision she had come to was that she must see him once alone, if possible, to ask him for her locket and explain what a wire that morning had told her, how it came to be put in his bag. How should she do this? Ignore that last hour of yesterday? Yes! yes! at all costs. Then simply take up the acquaintanceship from the time when she found the locket was lost? "I believe I can manage it," she thought at last, and put her head out of the window for the first glimpse of Fräulein Sandbach, who was waiting on the platform to welcome her.

"My dear, dear child, at last!" cried the warm-hearted woman, folding her in a close embrace. "Bad girl to delay! And let me see you. Not much the worse for your ter-rib-le adventure, except for ti-erd eyes and naugh-tee shadows round them. You shall go early to bed tonight and have another long rest. You are quite ti-erd, *nicht wahr?*"

"A bit sleepy!" conceded Barbara cheerfully, "but otherwise I'm as right as usual! 'Naught comes to no harm,' you know, little mother! How's everybody? I hope Harold has been a good boy, and worked hard. I'm going to do great things this Autumn. You must come down to the atelier one day next week and I'll have a surprise ready for you! By-the-bye, what did you think of the chaplain? Isn't it funny his having my name? P'raps

he spells it differently. Greta sent her love to you and Löttchen. Her son is the most comic creature I ever beheld, and simply enormous for five weeks old. *Mütterchen*, you'd better tell the chaplain that I'm a Wilbraham, too, or it'll be rather a shock to him when he hears his name!"

"He does know," answered Fräulein Luise emphatically. "But he was *vair-ree* surprised. And Lotte said he was quite pitiful, quite overr-come to hear how came your marriage—and now no husband. I think he is really a *very* good-looking man, Barbara, *nicht wahr?* And perhaps he is related to your husband. Who knows? Lotte told me he said 'Poo-er child!' on hearing of your tragedy."

Barbara was silent. She heard him saying it. Her heart leapt, and she wished she had not introduced the subject.

"But did you not like him?" persisted Fräulein Sandbach, who was given to building innocent romances round her guests' lives, with a refreshing disregard of inconvenient facts, and with the courageous imagination of a child. I do not think she was wrong.

God's mercy is upon the young,  
God's wisdom in the baby tongue  
That fears not anything.

And here was a heart of childlike simplicity, counterbalanced by the strong and healthy brain of a clever woman. Moreover, it was the most natural thing in the world to forget that Barbara was married—even while speaking of the fact—so remote, so strange and impossible was the whole affair to an outsider, and so entirely fresh and unmarried was Barbara's sunny, childish face.

"Yes; I thought him very jolly," she replied now, in even, dispassionate tones that belied the ache and tumult at her heart. "We had really great fun, especially over the German lesson. He's just like a big boy."

"And you do not so much like big boys?" supplemented Fräulein Luise.

"Oh, but I *do*," answered Barbara hastily. "Look at Harold!"

"True! And he is a *nice* boy! But

I like *par-tic-u-lar-lee* the chaplain's face. He is a *good* man. He is of better mind, too, than that see-ly little Mr. Rix, who preaches at dinnerr, and talks al-ways like a Gerr-man ex-er-cise!"

"Mr. Wilbraham won't talk like that!" laughed Barbara. "Ask him the German for cheese! Ah, here's the dear old *Hof* again!"

"Who is that on the balcony?" queried Fräulein Luise, peering up to distinguish the forms behind four or five red cigar or cigarette-ends before entering the house.

"Hah! *c'est* Mees-iz Wilbra-ham!" came in a thin French staccato, and one red light disappeared, to hover about them as they mounted the stairs, held in the carefully white fingers of Monsieur Ménégos.

"Little brat!" whispered Barbara under her breath; and Fräulein Luise chuckled.

"*Maintenant, s'il vous plaît, monsieur!*" she cried. "*Personne ne peut voir Mrs. Wilbraham jusqu'à ce qu'elle à mangé. Elle s'est bien fatiguée après son voyage.*"

"*Comme je suis fâché—désolé!*" murmured the little Frenchman, kissing Barbara's hand with exaggerated courtesy.

"*Mais je suis député par Monsieur Neilson d'offrir ses excuses parce qu'il n'est pas ici pour faire bon accueil à Madame Veelbraham. Il vous fait dire bien des choses aimables, et regrette que—*"

"That will do!" cried Fräulein Luise. "She is not a queen to receive zese deputations!" In moments of excitement her "th's" were apt to desert her.

Barbara laughed. "What's Monsieur Neilson been doing, monsieur?" she asked in a tone of amusement.

"It ees ze Gair-man, Mees-iz Veelbraham. He haf five page zat it must feenish before tomorrow; and Herr Weber vient d'arriver pour lui aider—*Ainsi—comprenez-vous!*" The little man shrugged his shoulders and tossed a long black lock out of his eyes which rolled upon Barbara in fervent admiration.

"*Taisez-vous! Taisez-vous!*" cried

Fraülein Luise impatiently. "Here supper is ready and getting cold—*Komm' hierher*, Barbara."

The girl passed on through the lighted anteroom, glancing unconsciously out into the dusky night.

The men on the balcony, whom Monsieur Ménégos had rejoined, watched her cross and saw her face turn unseeing toward them.

Two, who were strangers to her, thought, "Nice girl, that!" An Austrian colonel, whose daughter was at that moment in the salon uttering piercing "Ah's" that ran up and down the scale like a frightened mouse in a trap, heaved a sigh and wished that *Trudchen* might grow into "*ein so reisendes Mädchen*"; the little Frenchman leaned over the balcony and, rumpling his long sleek hair, started composing his seventh sonnet, this time to "*l'air fatigué*"; the fifth man was suddenly still—for one moment—and then resumed his lazy pacing to and fro.

Barbara entered the long dining-room with its two long parallel tables, and a cheery voice met and passed her, crying, "Mees-ter Wil-bra-ham! Come here!" as Fraülein Sandbach began filling Barbara's plate.

She was seated at the table when he entered, and she leaned back, tipping her chair, looked up with a friendly smile, and held out a careless hand.

"So you didn't get lost without your *Dolmetscher*?" she remarked. "Now what is a *Dolmetscher*? Don't say you've forgotten!"

"I'm afraid I have!" he confessed ruefully, as he took and dropped her hand with a touch like ice. "But—oh! wasn't it *guide*?"

He was feeling very sore. She had certainly forgotten—entirely! Probably she thought he was merely fooling when— Ah, well, it was best so. At any rate, he would play the game—and it was a game—the game of yesterday. She had chosen and indicated the terms on which they were to meet. Yes, it was best so.

"You guessed!" cried Barbara, attacking her supper with well-assumed

energy. "And you guessed wrong, but I'm not going to tell you. You must look in the dictionary. Fraülein Luischen, isn't that a shocking mem—" She stopped abruptly and then finished the word, "memory?"

"How on earth am I to look out in the dictionary a word I can't spell, in letters I can't distinguish?" complained Wilbraham.

"You can spell Doll, I suppose?" she demanded with much scorn.

"Oh, yes, yes—" he assented meekly. "I'll look it out tomorrow."

"That's laziness!" said Barbara sternly. "And I won't countenance it. Where's your dictionary? Why not get it?"

"I can't! It's away at the church," he replied, in the tone of one who advances an unanswerable argument.

"Well?" asked Barbara calmly.

"You don't think I'm going all the way up there, *now*?" he cried, with righteous indignation. "Fraülein Sandbach, I appeal to you!"

"Oh, I will not inter-fere!" returned Fraülein Luise, who was listening to the sparring in huge delight, her kind, tender face beaming with amusement. "You are big enough to fight your own battles."

"Yes, certainly," said Barbara, in gentle displeasure. "I am sorry, Mr. Wilbraham, that you should display this—h'm—cowardice on the top of such colossal ignorance. You will find the word under D-O-L-M."

He got up with a pretense of sulks and moved toward the door.

"Oh, by-the-bye," said Barbara, and there was a new inflection—a certain hesitation—manifest in her voice. "You remember my losing a—key in the train?" Her eyes met his gravely and compelled him to understand. "Well, I wired to Oberhausen, and it appears the woman picked it up and put it in *your* bag. I should be so grateful if you would have a look while you're getting the dictionary."

Wilbraham's face had changed during her speech—a change she could not understand.

"I found your—key," he answered

slowly, and looked on the floor. "Do you want it tonight?"

"Please," replied Barbara very gently. "How could I unlock my bag without it?" she added, with a funny little smile.

Wilbraham promptly disappeared, and Fräulein Sandbach chaffed the "carre-less girl" on leaving her keys about, till he returned, in about ten minutes.

"You've been very quick," remarked Barbara conversationally.

He dropped a little white packet into her hand without a word.

"Thank you," she said gravely. "And now, please, Herr Knabe, look out *Dolmetscher*, for I've finished my supper and am off to unpack; but I must hear that word before I go."

Five minutes later Brian strolled up to the church again, a pipe between his lips, his hands in his pockets, and the passions of holy love and unholy jealousy at war within his heart.

### XIII

It was the next evening, a Thursday, and about half-an-hour after supper the men strolled into the huge salon, where a "Musical Evening" was in full swing.

Wilbraham had not seen Barbara all day, except at meals, when she was the distant centre (he had been given the barren honor of a place at the "grown-up" table) of a buzz of chatter and merriment. There were about five-and-forty guests in the *pension*, of whom perhaps eighteen—excluding himself—were staid (or otherwise) parents and chaperons at Brian's table, presided over by the elder Fräulein Sandbach; while the rest varied in age from twelve to six-and-twenty. Of these, eight or ten were English children attending the *Tochter-Schule* or the *Gymnasium*, and there were, besides, the Austrian colonel's daughter; a German opera-singer; an English governess teaching at the *Tochter-Schule*; a German student (musical); the little Frenchman; two

young men who were staying only a month to polish up their German, one being a captain in the Royal Engineers; an American reputed to be a millionaire—the object of much attention on the part of two elderly chaperons; four girls who were studying in one way or another; a Polish exile who was in business in the town and passed for a Russian; a young man working with Harold for the Diplomatic Service; Harold himself, and Barbara.

As Wilbraham sat with his back to this table and had for his outlook the drab wall behind one or two very sour and chaperonic (to coin a word!) faces, he could derive no benefit from the fun even as an onlooker. It made him feel abominably old to be planted there with the rest who were, after all, he told himself, more his contemporaries than the babies at the other tables. Indeed, the sense of youth which had fallen upon him like a magic cloak in Holland had dropped off as completely, leaving him to feel a weight of years all the heavier for the new pain that imposed it; and it was with the wretched feeling of being "out of it" that a little later he proceeded with the other smokers to join the salon party.

As they opened the door a chord was struck on a guitar, and the shrill, powerful voice of Miss Austrian-Colonel declared, starting on a note a quarter of a semitone higher, that her life, her life was desolate and drear.

Brian, who came in last, closed the door softly and dropped into the nearest chair.

He was thoroughly musical and just now in an acutely sensitive nervous state, and the string of false notes was like a series of dentist's performances on an exposed nerve. As one piercing protest, in desperate fear of falling short of its aim, soared waveringly above its legitimate flat and sank uncertainly to make an interval that should have been a minor sixth, he moved involuntarily, and, moving, saw Barbara at the other end of the room and caught her eye.

Whatever expression it held changed like a lightning flash to one of amused

and sympathetic comprehension. She lifted one slender finger and illustrated a corkscrew in space, and then winked wickedly before picking up again the lace she was making. Wilbraham had smiled responsively, but the smile died as Barbara's eyes left his and he was able to notice her surroundings.

On a low chair beside her sat Harold Neilson, apparently trying to keep his long limbs from trespassing beyond their fair share of floor space, while his eyes were on her work and his hands busy in reeling up—or entangling, according to the point of view—her thread.

Every now and then he spoke to her in a voice that Wilbraham unconsciously strained his ears to catch, and laughter flashed over her face as she threw back a whispered retort.

The insult to composer and to musical taste having been drawn to a melancholy close, there reigned a general buzz of conversation, and then Harold was asked to recite.

He did recite, and exceedingly well, too, as Brian was in justice forced to admit; though certain prisoners in the deepest dungeons of his heart struggled desperately in their chains when Barbara's face lighted or quivered with feeling in response to the electric appeal that rang in Harold's voice through every line of Kipling's "English Flag."

It was to her, and to her alone, that he undisguisedly looked for his applause, as he afterward moved back to her side.

"Now you've got to sing, Babs!" he declared, laying forcible hold of the lace and depositing it on a neighboring table.

There was general assent and entreaty; but Barbara, looking suddenly extraordinarily shy and charming, sat still, while a lovely color flooded her cheeks.

Neilson seized her by the arms from behind her chair and lifted her out of it.

"Billy!" she cried, laughing at him over her shoulder.

Wilbraham caught the picture and

ground his teeth—metaphorically; actually, he picked up a German novel and appeared to peruse it with absorbed interest.

Barbara, propelled by Harold, had to pass him on her way to the piano. As she reached him she stopped and he looked up, with a subdued irritation in face and manner.

"I'm afraid of such a musical critic," she said, half smiling and half serious. "You'd better go out of the room, Mr. Wilbraham. I warn you that my performance isn't what is called singing. I only make a noise—a very little noise—entirely by the light of nature."

"I'm not a critic!" protested Brian, trying to see the big hands that still clasped her white arms, "and I certainly sha'n't go unless your noise is too much for me. I've no objection to nature—in reason."

She laughed and was moving on when the book attracted her attention.

"What are you reading?" she asked. "What! '*Der Wilde Reutlinger*!' and —*upside down*! Oh, Mr. Wilbraham, what affection! and we might have thought you a first-rate scholar!"

There was a shout of laughter, led by Harold from the dozen people close to them, in which Wilbraham joined.

"Look here," he exclaimed as it subsided, looking up at her with his kindly, humorous smile and a gleam of almost brotherly tenderness in his eyes, "I'm not going to be treated with this unmerited scorn. The disgrace all lies on the shoulders of my instructress, who hasn't even taught me to distinguish whether a letter is on its head or its heels."

"I grovel!" cried Barbara, with mock humility, dropping to her knees on the polished floor, much to her captor's evident disgust. "You shall learn your letters tomorrow."

"Here, get up!" said Harold crossly, "and sing."

"Snap, snap, snap, snap, snap!" she retorted, laughing, and mimicking his tone; but she picked herself up with graceful ease and went to the piano.

"Go away," she said to Harold, who



followed her. "There's nothing to turn over, and I don't like to feel a solid lump overshadowing me and mopping up my little squeaky voice."

He moved off obediently and sank into a seat, his features assuming an expression of anticipatory content, and Barbara began to sing.

Her voice was small, but very clear and sweet and "carrying," and it filled the big room with a sound like fairy music heard through a dream.

Wilbraham put down the book and rested his elbow on his knee. His eyes, shaded by his hand, watched her intently.

She sang in English, and her voice, unspoiled—as so many are—by training, thrilled and leapt and fell from note to note like a waterfall in sunshine, splashing over rocks.

One rested instinctively and utterly on the truth of every sound, as if her spirit floated out on the melody and—like an angel echo of earthly speech—whispered to each heart its solitary and incommunicable message.

"Within a garden-rosary  
There grows a little tree;  
Upon it blooms a rosebud rare,  
So wondrous sweet and fair!  
Would God that thou wert meant to be,  
O Rosebud rare, for me!  
Deep in the shelter of my heart  
I'd hold thee, tenderly."

The song ceased; and there was a hush of throbbing silence, broken by Miss Alport's voice.

"I always think that's so silly, don't you, Mr. Neilson?" she murmured sleepily. "Most songs are spoiled by stupid words. How could anyone hold a rosebud *in the heart*? Besides, such a fuss about nothing! If you see a rosebud on a tree, why not pick it?"

"Supposing it were not your tree?" suggested Wilbraham, Harold having ignored the remark. "You might have conscientious scruples then about appropriating the rose."

Barbara wheeled swiftly and silently round from the piano and shot a quick glance at him. He was regarding Miss Alport with apparently keen interest.

"And all this time, no one has thanked me for my song!" she cried,

in a tone of injured dignity. "Very well, then; I shall sing another! It's your own fault. I'm like the organ-grinders in England who won't go till they've got a penny."

"Here's a penny," exclaimed Wilbraham hastily, withdrawing his attention from the snake-like beauty (Harold was in the habit of saying that you always expected to find her coiled up in one of your boots), and fishing a coin out of his pocket. "I am willing to sacrifice myself for the public good; and hang the expense!"

"Well! I call that rude!" giggled Miss Alport, writhing with delight. "I wouldn't like a man to speak like that to me!" Her remark was an audible aside to Harold, who observed her gravely for a second and then remarked briefly:

"No fear!"

"Too late now!" Barbara was declaring to Wilbraham. "My dealings are on sound business principles—as far as I understand them—but I'll stop at the end of the next song for twopence."

"Blackmailing!" ejaculated Harold, in accents of horror, "or something very like it; however, I dare say we can collect the second penny, considering the circumstances. I'll go round with the hat when the ordeal is over."

Barbara sang again, this time a song in which laughter and impudence frolicked gaily. Her voice caught the spirit of it, and liquid notes of purest fun danced out of her parted lips in joyous merriment.

"Else here I swear  
Young love may go  
For aught I care  
To—Jericho!"

There was a little burst of "thank you's," and she got up.

"I see you've all learned your lesson!" she said approvingly, putting her songs together with idle grace.

"I always think," observed Harold slowly, "that it would sound far more effective if that last line were altered to '*To table-d'hôte*.' Of course you'd suppress the 't' (it's unnecessary at table-d'hôte—and unusual); and there's

far more of the big, big D about the sound of that than in mild little 'Jericho.' "

"Carping at my songs again!" remarked Barbara, in a tone of determined offense. "However, I think you're right. It's more probable he *would* go to 'table-d'ho.' Man can generally find speediest consolation through his tummy."

Everyone laughed, and somebody cried, "One for you, Neilson!"

Miss Alport looked languidly across at Wilbraham.

"Mrs. Wilbraham's experience of men has apparently not been a happy one," she drawled.

There was a terrible silence; and several glanced hurriedly and involuntarily at Barbara.

She was standing by the piano facing the room, a tall, graceful figure in a dress of pale and shimmering blue. Her face in its halo of coppery-lighted hair was absolutely colorless, and out of it her big eyes, now dark with irrepressible feeling, stared in piteous protest at Miss Alport's face.

Wilbraham sprang to his feet, and Harold, his eyes blazing, moved to her side instinctively. Everyone tried to think what to do, but with paralyzed minds did nothing.

It was Barbara herself who came to the rescue.

Her features suddenly relaxed, and she moved slowly forward.

"That was not in good taste," she remarked quietly, almost contemptuously, and picked up her work with hands that trembled ever so slightly.

The ice was broken, and Harold turned to Miss Alport in a perfect frenzy of rage.

"You d—d beast!" he growled, and then—(oh, bathos!) "I tell you what, you've done for yourself as far as I'm concerned!"

But it was the luckiest thing he could have said, for it enabled everyone to give vent to their feelings in a peal of laughter and amused comment.

"Neilson! Well, the cheek! Wait till you're asked!" While Barbara hid her face in her hands and laughed

uncontrollably, gasping out at last, "Oh, Harold! You dear boy!"

Under cover of the general uproar, which was perhaps exaggerated in the desire to cover the cruel moment, Fräulein Sandbach sailed up the room to Miss Alport's seat. She was quivering with rage no less keen than Harold's and her kindly, tender face wore the scorn of an avenging goddess.

What she said was not heard, but the girl, who had cowered back before Harold's wrath and was apparently trying to shrink into obscurity, slunk out of the salon, and after that night Gotha knew her no more.

"All the same," said Barbara very gently, an hour later, to Neilson, "don't swear at a woman again, Harold; it's—it's bad form."

"I wouldn't do such a thing," he replied readily. "It wasn't a woman I was swearing at—it was a dev—"

"Hush!" interrupted Barbara, putting a hand over his mouth.

Harold held it there and kissed it twice. They were standing on the landing and at that moment Barbara turned to see Wilbraham coming up behind them.

His face was very pale, and his eyes met hers.

"Good night, both of you," she said suddenly, and vanished down a long passage.

"But what is he thinking?" her sore heart asked. "Why is he angry?"

#### XIV

BRIAN refused his lesson the following evening when he was beckoned into the crowded salon and a friendly voice called out, "Here I am, ready to remedy the defects in your education."

He knew he was behaving like a boor, and scorned himself even while he tried in vain to soften the curt rebuff.

"Many thanks," he called, and his tone was almost insolent, "but I find I can get on so well without German that I'm too lazy to bother about it." She flushed up so vividly that he added,

"I'm really awfully obliged, but I must write my sermon for Sunday."

Barbara turned back into the room without a word; and Wilbraham, all at once utterly ashamed of himself, felt much as he would have done if he had kicked a favorite dog which had rushed to welcome him.

But the sore and bitter pain which relentless fact had brought him seemed now and then almost beyond bearing and gave him a surliness of which two minutes later he heartily repented.

So no more was said about the lessons, and he saw hardly anything of Barbara till late in the following week. When they did meet she was always pleasant and quietly friendly, but there was a new distance, slight but sure, in her manner that marked her sense of his behavior. He gathered that she was working exceedingly hard, and she spent the evening after supper as a rule in her own room, where two or three friends from among the guests or from the town joined her for music or merely for sociability. Brian on such evenings, smoking late on the balcony, caught the sound of laughter or animated conversation through the open window, saw shadows pass and repress on the thin white curtain that swelled and sank to and fro in the soft night breeze; once heard her sing again and that time promptly went up to his own quarters and set himself to wrestle with a stiff bit of Hebrew.

Harold, he knew, was generally of the party. Harold had sat next her in church.

Brian had met them twice in the *Stadt* together and had also seen them return only just in time for supper after a long bicycle ride.

Gallantly as he might struggle against the pangs of jealousy, no sooner had he got himself well in hand and brought himself to accept the inevitable with manliness than some fresh and sudden proof, as it seemed to him, of how the land lay between Barbara and Harold opened up the wound and the battle was all to be fought over again. Truth dies hard.

"It was not Love that went." Love will never go, and will never be conquered, though all that is earthly of it may be crushed to death. Or call it a plant that, once rooted, no digging can dislodge; and the wise man or woman knows that there remains only for him or her to give it courageous pruning, such pruning as makes it flower more freely and burst into white blossoms, larger and more spotless than before.

Ten days of Wilbraham's holiday were over. And *this* was Foreign Travel!

It was a Thursday, his second Thursday in Germany, and he appeared at breakfast just as Harold strolled in by the opposite door.

"Hullo!" cried the latter cheerfully. "Got anything to do this morning?"

"Nothing particular," replied Wilbraham, helping himself to coffee. No one else was down yet. "Why?"

"I'm going over to Finsterbergen for Fraulein Luise, bicycling. Come, too?"

"I'm afraid I can't." Brian couldn't for the life of him invent a reason, but Harold was not prone to "touchiness."

"You mean you won't. Well, I don't blame you; there's a beastly wind. I shouldn't go myself if I hadn't promised. Horrid swizzle! I suggested it thinking Ba—Mrs. Wilbraham would go, too; in fact, she was going, but she's got to get her work done today—got behindhand—and she's backed out."

"She seems to be working hard," observed Brian, trying to be civil. He was beginning to realize that his present miserable mood of surly irritability was perpetually leading him into incivility, and was accordingly "on guard."

"She is," Harold frowned; "a jolly sight too hard, and it's telling on her, too. She's got no end of grit, but it's my belief that rotten old smash you had coming over's given her nerves a bit of a shake. She hasn't as much go in her as usual. I wish she'd chuck the atelier for a bit and have some long spins with me in the *Wald*—far better

for her than grinding away in that stuffy little hole."

Wilbraham was silent. He felt he could not stand Harold's calm air of proprietorship much longer. The relation puzzled him as much as it hurt. Their manner to each other was that of the frankest brotherly and sisterly intimacy. Their friendship was an accepted fact in the household. He did not believe that Barbara could ever so far forget her wifehood—such as it was—as to indulge in even a mild flirtation; and no suggestion of "love-making" vulgarized the demeanor of either—except on that one evening! But then there was the locket! Wilbraham, in his loyal faith and intuitive knowledge of Barbara's character, was convinced that she would never step beyond the barrier her marriage had raised; and yet—and yet—would she wear in a locket a man's portrait—and hair—unless she loved him?

Harold pulled the soft crumb out of a particularly golden and rocky *Brötchen* and put it aside.

"Talking of the smash," he began again in his lazy, high-bred voice, serenely unconscious of Wilbraham's mental attitude, "rummy thing, you two coming here the same day—same name—and not knowing each other from Adam! Same initials, too! Rather convenient for *Gepäck*, though, if you were running the whole show. I guess you were taken for a *Brautfahrt* couple!" He chuckled and heaped butter on the crust.

"Want a crusty one? Here you are—try this dish. Some are horrid flabby—I must get around Augusta and ask her to bake 'em up more another morning."

But Wilbraham's ear had caught one word, and its vague familiarity started his mind on a backward tour.

"What's that—*Braut*—something?" he asked in a moment, suddenly reaching the connection.

"*Brautfahrt*? Oh, 'bridal journey,' honeymoon! Same initials, see? and traveling together! That's what you were probably taken for!" He laughed again, as if with some private

source of amusement beyond the obvious minute joke. Wilbraham suddenly wanted to knock him down, but laughed carelessly instead.

"Not at my age!"

"Get out! You're not a bishop yet!" cried Harold. "Well, I'm off! If you won't come, you won't; in other words, and the most classic Deutsch, '*Geh zum Teufel!*' Ta-ta!" And he pushed back his chair, vaulted another, and vanished.

Wilbraham, following more leisurely and with his mind revolving round and puzzling over Barbara's innocent lie, came upon Fräulein Lotte in the passage, flushed, breathless and laughing.

"Zat mad boy!" she began, between her gasps. "*Ach!* he is too fun-nee! You like him, Meester Wilbraham, *nicht wahr?*" She nodded questioningly and added, "No one could help it! He and Mrs. Wilbraham, they are a pay-er, dear children!"

He felt that he ought to be getting hardened to the particular sensation these words aroused.

"He's just gone for a ride," he remarked rather absently.

"So? after ne-erly upsetting me! But I was just now coming to fint you, your vair-ree self! and offerr you a *gr-reat tr-r-reat!*" Fräulein Lotte nodded and smiled and looked so knowing and pleased that Brian's surly mood relaxed and he smiled in response.

"How very nice of you! What is it?" he asked.

"Aha! but I weel not say! You shall be vair-ree pleaset; that is e-nough. Can you be read-y to go with me to the *Stadt* at twelve? *So!* And," her voice sank to a melodramatic whisper, "do not talk of it!"

"I won't," he assured her in the same tone; and with more nods and delightful smiles, she waved her hand and left him to proceed to his quarters.

At five minutes to twelve he was back at the *Hofthüre*, and a moment later Fräulein Lotte came tripping from her room.

"Ex-cell-ent!" she cried. "And now we start. Can you guess, sir, where I shall take you?"

Wilbraham couldn't and felt, moreover, that he didn't care a brass button; but her good humor and high spirits were so infectious and her warm-hearted desire to give pleasure so genuine that he exerted himself to reply in the same strain, and as they walked briskly along in the clear, bracing air he began to feel the fit of depression sliding away from him and his spirits rising.

Their way led through the narrow Erfurter-Strasse into the Neumarkt, where the Margarethen Kirche stands—historic witness to the little town's respectability. Sturdy peasant women in short, voluminous petticoats and heavy rolled turbans, their backs laden with Marktkorb, Waschkorb above that and baby atop of all, and holding the ubiquitous umbrella, tramped here and there, chattering in their shrill, broad Thüringian voices. Tall, slim, gray-coated officers, with clinking spurs and clanking, dangling swords, and beauteous skyward-aiming mustaches, strolled up and down the streets in twos or threes, each one proclaiming by the pleased self-consciousness of his expression and jauntiness of his air German militarism and his own sense of a godlike personal importance.

Diving down a *Gasse* behind the church, Fräulein Lotte, gracious, eager, chatty and sympathetic, led him swiftly on till they turned a sharp corner and came to an insignificant door in a plaster wall dotted with one or two others equally humble and a few dreary-looking windows.

"Whay-er are we then?" she asked him, with another knowing smile of pleasure.

Wilbraham shook his head, his eyes twinkling.

"I assure you," he said solemnly, "that I have only four and a half-pence on me, and that my signet ring is brass, my watch a half-guinea one, and the chain steel. Also, being an orphan and unappreciated, the ransom that I should fetch would hardly cover the cost of my keep till you received it. Do consider this."

Fräulein Lotte laughed and nodded.

"Ach! we vill-ain-ous Gerrmans! but

we will see!" So saying, she opened the door and they entered a small, clean, humble passage.

"Follow me!" she said in a mysterious whisper, opening a door opposite, and stepped into what was apparently a pitch-dark cupboard.

Brian obediently kept close at her heels and shut the door behind them.

"I have four pistols, a revolver, a poisoned dagger and a bottle of prussic acid with me," he told her in a low voice which he tried to make blood-curdling.

"Goot!" she answered. "We shall, no doubt, meet them."

She opened a third door, throwing it wide and stepping aside out of the way, and Brian stood on the threshold of an artist's studio, which at first glance seemed a veritable chaos of easel and paints, plaster heads and busts and other models.

"The atelier," said his guide triumphantly, "and here is Herr Baumgartner, the master."

There was, indeed, Herr Baumgartner, the master, with long, square-cut, brown beard and gentle eyes, so exactly like one of du Maurier's artists that he seemed to have stepped straight out of an old *Punch*, but Brian barely returned the great man's polite greeting. His eyes, wandering hastily over the tops of easels among a dozen absorbed men and women, had suddenly fallen upon a clear-cut profile and mass of rough, dark hair and thick plaits, above a figure in a long white pinafore. She was intent on a picture he could not see, but she looked up at the sound of Lotte's voice—and saw him. Taken by surprise a slow, vivid color mounted painfully to the roots of her hair, and she turned nervously to her palette again and dabbed a brush into some paint.

"We have come to see Mrs. Wilbraham's picture," explained Fräulein Lotte, in German, with her pretty, vivacious eagerness, and forthwith picked her way carefully between the easels to where Barbara stood.

Here she paused in almost speechless amazement, her clasped hands and



ecstatic face proclaiming rapturous admiration.

"It is quite wonderful and beautiful! Come here, Mr. Weelbraham! Come and look!"

Thus adjured, there was nothing for it but for him to thread his way discreetly across the room and come to a standstill before a life-size and lifelike portrait of—Harold (of course!)—head and shoulders.

There he was, indeed, with his lazy, impudent smile and honest, sunny blue eyes—so like himself that the picture almost seemed alive.

Brian looked at it for a moment in silence—his heart swelling, and a sickening sense of finality closing in on him. Yet that she could paint his picture publicly!—surely she could not do that if it were more than friendship!

"What about this?" laughed the hideous little voice he had been so willing to stifle. "No mistake now; look at her face!" it added maliciously.

Wilbraham glanced at her and noted bitterly the rich color, the eyes that never left her palette, and the distressed droop of those carmine lips.

"Caught," his evil genius said sneeringly, and a demoniacal impulse prompted him to prolong his inspection.

Fraülein Lotte, mistaking his silence for consent to her enthusiastic praise (she had long ago learned that a Briton's enthusiasm is not to be measured by the "length of his tongue"), moved on to look at other efforts.

"I must apologize for my share in this unkind surprise visit," Brian said in low but icy voice and with an inflection that somehow conveyed bitter contempt.

"I did not know we were coming here and—"

Barbara interrupted him, her voice very still and toneless.

"Pray don't apologize," she said. "Interruptions don't worry me at all. We are quite used here to inspections by all kinds of people."

The less than human in Brian spoke again. "But I must congratulate you on your success—and on the—memory

that can hold a face so well as to paint its likeness perfectly without the model."

There was deliberate insult in his emphasis, which she could hear, although the shaft missed its aim. Moving away he looked down at her and met the mute startled distress and perplexity in her deep eyes. A savage, unholy joy seized him that he had made her feel *something*. He half turned back.

"I ought to tell you," he added carelessly, "that the locket came open as I picked it up—so that I should have known anyhow." And without another glance he joined Fraülein Lotte and they left the atelier.

*Known? Known what?*

Barbara fought with a deadly dizziness and put the last finishing touches to her picture, the very last—and then . . .

## 

It was almost another week since the day when Barbara had been driven home from the atelier in a droschky, having to her own disgust and the consternation of her fellow-students fainted right away without a word of warning.

Fraülein Luise, on hearing what had happened, sent for the doctor, who pronounced that the *Gnädigste* was suffering from the effects of the shock of her adventure in crossing, accentuated by subsequent overwork. He had enjoined a holiday from the atelier, to which Barbara, looking very tired and colorless, had given relieved consent.

She had indeed spent more time over her music and much in long walks with friends. With regard to Wilbraham, if others were present she treated him with quiet, indifferent civility, the merry sparring being dropped by mutual consent; if she chanced to meet him alone she ignored him utterly and even looked *through* him with careless, unfriendly eyes.

Brian, who was by this time disgusted with himself for his unpardonable exhibition of rudeness and temper,

longed to apologize, but felt that he had gone too far—that even if he could express his contrition adequately yet she would give him no opportunity for doing so; and thus with each day he felt the barrier between them widen, till the girl in the blue traveling-coat was out of sight on the further shore of an unfordable river, and the Mrs. Wilbraham he was allowed to meet was simply a stranger, a woman with clear grave eyes that barely recognized his existence, and a mouth of which the lines haunted him in their new pathetic sternness.

If he could only regain the ground he had so wilfully lost!

Yet how refer to his inexcusable impertinence without some reference to one or other of the two facts which had led him to commit it—his own hopeless longing or her friendship with Harold? And this the very fact of her being married (so difficult to realize and to remember!) in either case equally forbade.

But he had failed—for the first time in his life—as a gentleman; and this, apart from all other aspects of the matter, stung Brian's sense of honor and recovered pride and sanity till he came at last to the only possible conclusion.

He would make an opportunity and apologize—simply and briefly. He would say, "I was contemptible, insufferable, inexcusable, unpardonable—and I had to tell you so. Don't ever speak to me again—I deserve it."

And he began to watch for the one chance of a word with her alone. But the barren days dragged by, and circumstances—inexorable handmaidens of Fate—stood between his intentions and their fulfilment.

Meanwhile, for Barbara life wore an aspect so changed, and so charged with a new fierce unrest and bitterness, that it seemed to her the long trouble her fatal mistake had brought her was as nothing compared with this fresh tragedy wrought by the hand of Fate.

She was too eminently healthy-minded and buoyant-natured to be

given to introspection; but it was natural, inevitable, that in these strange circumstances she should sift and analyze her past words and acts in a fruitless search for the key to Brian's inexplicable conduct.

It was in vain that she flung herself with courageous zeal into the duties and pleasures of each day; in vain that she laughed and joked with Harold and forced herself deliberately to absorb her mind in discussions—philosophical and social—with Fräulein Luise and Fräulein Lotte; the hour came round relentlessly when the last visitor would say good night, when she would be left to face the long night hours in company with persistent queries that knocked at her heart till it ached and bled, and with that desolate sense of a friend lost past all hope of regaining.

But on Monday night—it was three weeks to the hour since she had first seen him—illumination came, fitful and faint, but enough to throw a sudden glow of warmth and radiant possibility on the dark path Barbara was treading. She couldn't trace it to any reasoning—it was inspiration—the thought that suggested the magic explanation.

She had been in bed an hour, but she sat up suddenly in the dark and said aloud, "Harold! He thinks Harold is—he thinks I am— Oh!" She laughed softly with incredulous amusement and then put her hands up to fiery cheeks.

"But the idiot!—the *dear* idiot!"—and how simply blind of her not to have seen it before!

She had seen his jealousy—yes! who could help it when he had spoken like that; but of *friendship*, she had thought, and hardly worth considering, not of—! WELL!

Of course, the locket! That did look suspicious. "What should I think if I had seen a girl wearing Harold's miniature?" But if he had thought, seriously, that she and Harold (it was *too* funny!) were in love with each other, what business was it of his? unless, unless—

Barbara had had enough experience of men not to build any hopes or castles

on such slight foundation as the episode of the train afforded. She did Wilbraham the justice to realize that he meant what he said, but she put the words at their face-value—"We might learn"; whereas they had been only the surface ripple of a tremendous tidal wave.

If the instant revelation of her marriage had not come just then, he would probably have said more—"have felt more," she told herself, "but as it was he was stopped in time." But was he? No! Not if he was so—so absurdly jealous as that!

"Then after all, he *does* care, he *really* cares!" and a little inarticulate cry of joy and tenderness escaped from her smiling lips. But with this thought came the quick check? What good? for she might not even hold out her hand and say, "I care, too"; she might not comfort him for the pain she had given; she might not even hope—since that involved a thought like murder.

And if he thought that—that she and Harold were in love with each other, "what must he think of our 'fooling'?"—fooling innocent enough unless it were the cloak of what was to her forbidden.

"How he must despise me! No wonder he was disgusted—and disappointed in me. No wonder he spoke his disgust. But he might have asked me to explain! Yet how could he? What right had he?"

Then what was to be done?

On that question Barbara slept. With the morning's gray, unfriendly light new doubts arose, and the whole question had to be fought out again, another long day lived through, and then night again, with another flash of that hopeful light, steadier this time, and lasting long enough for Barbara to rekindle by it her lamp of faith.

When she woke on the Wednesday morning her dreams had suggested to her a possible course of action; and while she dressed she pondered it in her mind and resolved to carry it out. But how? And when? She went into breakfast looking more her old self than she had done for days, and with

some of her usual sparkle and fun. Wilbraham, entering the dining-room very late after a wretched night, caught the tail-end of one small passage-at-arms and glanced at her face. She was smiling over her shoulder at her opponent as she left the room, and he noticed the softer lights in her brown eyes and was glad. Her gravity the last few days had puzzled and worried him. If only he hadn't been such a fool and a brute!

"You're coming to decorate, aren't you, Mrs. Wilbraham?" called one of the girls as Barbara was disappearing. A wedding was to take place the next day between two members of the English colony in the town, and the Sommer-Palais English had undertaken to decorate the church.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Barbara, turning in the doorway. "I'd quite forgotten. I'll come, certainly, but I'm afraid it can't be till the afternoon."

"Oh, bother," answered the other. "Well, may we leave you the altar rails and lower windows?"

"Leave me what you like," said Barbara; "I'll go up after dinner." And as she moved away she thought, "My opportunity!"

## XVI

At four o'clock, after a busy two hours in the chapel, Barbara still had one window to finish and an armful of yellow roses and soft greenery to work with. She held them up against the panes and debated on the arrangement of them. Then instead of setting to work she paused, and knelt down suddenly in one of the seats and buried her face in her hands.

Five minutes later she moved softly to the door leading out of the church into the kitchen of the chaplain's house and knocked.

A sleepy-looking old woman who looked after the house and church appeared at once and eyed her with grim surprise.

"Will you be so good as to ask the chaplain to come down for a moment?"

said Barbara in German. "Tell him one of the ladies from the Sommer-Palais—Mrs. Wilbraham—wishes to speak to him."

The old Frau grunted and closed the door, and a sudden nervousness seized the girl and sent a throb of anxiety through her.

If he should be horrible again!

"But he won't," she told herself steadily.

"Will he come? I'll go on with the window." She picked up the flowers, but stood still listening to the slow, difficult tread of the old body climbing the stairs. At the same moment came a sudden clattering of other footsteps down the flight at the hall end of the church, which lay in the middle of the whole building, having dwelling-houses east and west and above it. A second more and the door in the east end opened and Wilbraham came in.

Had he heard? Why had he come? Barbara's heart thumped painfully, but snatching at her self-control she breathed an inward prayer and moved to meet him, her hands still full of yellow roses. He looked very white as he came straight toward her through the chancel in the golden light and met her at the altar rails.

"Have you come to see how much we've done?" she asked him in the hushed voice of those who honor sacred places, and clinging desperately to her presence of mind.

"Yes—no," he stammered, and then his nervousness suddenly vanished and his voice steadied.

"Barbara!" he cried in low, trenchant tones. "Can you forgive me?"

It was not what he had meant to say; and till the word was said he had not even thought of her as "Barbara."

He was looking down into her face with his own full of penitence and pleading, and unconsciously she dropped the roses and put out both her hands toward him.

Toward him—and then, as once before, she remembered and drew softly back till her trembling limbs leaned against the front seat.

Brian moved nearer her.

"You *do* forgive me?" he said hoarsely. "I can never forgive myself—never! I was mad!"

She pulled herself together with a tremendous effort—and smiled at him, though her eyes filled fast with tears.

"I'm so glad you've said that first," she said, and there was a half-sob in her voice that hurt him like a sting.

"I'd just sent for you." She paused and with one finger lifted two shining drops from her long lashes. "I wanted to tell you—to explain. I can't bear for you to be thinking things of me that—that do me injustice. Don't speak"—for he had leaned forward impetuously—"let me tell you straight out or I can't make it plain. You understand now about—all that happened as we came here?" She looked at him wistfully and Wilbraham nodded. He would not return her gaze. "You understand that when I found you were a cousin of—my husband, I couldn't tell you my name without explaining . . .

"I don't whine about my punishment, because I brought it on myself; it was my own fault entirely. . . . I was very unhappy at home, but I ought to have known that cowardly shirking of one's troubles can bring no happiness. I did like him, but that is not enough; and I have much to be thankful for, and especially that the punishment hasn't been heavier than it is—I have at least freedom. The moment I had said 'I will' I knew it was all wrong, and it is more than I deserve that—that it ended *there*. So the least I could do was to take it like"—she smiled, that rainbow smile again—"like a Briton. . . . But it was *only* unhappiness that made me such a fool—you *do* understand that?" Her voice pleaded with him to believe in her.

"You know I do!" said Brian with difficulty, and his eyes met hers. "Don't go on—it hurts you. I believe—I believe *nothing* of you but all that is heroic and purest and loveliest; and—"

"Don't, *please*," she interrupted, the tears, glad yet painful, raining

down her cheeks while her eyes shone. "I can't go on if you say things—like that; and I must finish. I want to explain about the picture and the locket. Harold"—she hesitated—"I have known him since he was two and I five. Each was an only child and we played together always. He came here some months ago to learn German for the Diplomatic Service and when I came out again this year it seemed a splendid chance to do what I could never do in their own house—for chiefly practical reasons—make a picture of him as a surprise present for his dear mother, who has always mothered me. It was only half done when I went to England in July, and I couldn't finish it without himself or a good likeness. He was too busy for long sittings now, so I borrowed his mother's locket. I pretended I wanted to get the case copied for myself for a miniature I had. It was her birthday this week, so I had to get it done and packed and sent off quickly. One thing more. I didn't care for Luischen to know I had the locket, or rather about its being lost, because it would have meant such a lot of explanation, and the truth is I didn't want a fuss about that happy journey. That's all."

She stopped.

Wilbraham was silent, looking across the church and out of the window, fighting manfully a desperate longing to take her in his arms and hold her fast—fast.

She dried her eyes.

"I think," she began again very slowly, "that you misunderstood the relationship between Harold and me. It has always been brother and sister—why, he is three years younger than I am! And besides, if it *had* been anything else, how could I have—have let things be as they are? I mean, I couldn't have let him kiss me or—or that sort of thing—could I? When I am married!" The gentle surprise of a child's pure heart echoed in her words, and she seemed to pause for his acquiescence. Still Brian made no sign.

"You remember," Barbara's voice was lower still and very, very sweet. It seemed to Wilbraham suddenly that the church had filled with an invisible company of white-winged, white-souled beings moving softly to and fro, and that the rustle of their wings blended and harmonized in some mysterious way with the melody of that tender voice. All sense of earthly things had dropped away; he was conscious only of their own two spirits among that silent throng and of this strange spiritual world of rarefied sight and sound and scent into which her pure heart had so swiftly led them. "You remember," Barbara said, "that we spoke of Love. . . . It was the truth that I told you then—I *had never known*." His eyes turned toward hers and a long, long look passed between them.

The castle clock chimed the half-hour, those haunting notes that hint at a completeness yet to come—sure to come.

Wilbraham drew a long, deep breath.

"We both know now," he said slowly, and his voice had stolen that wonderful hush that seemed born of the place and the Vision.

"Yes," she answered simply; and silence fell like a veil from God's own hand dropped down between them and the world without.

It was Barbara who moved first. A little sigh went through her, as through one returning to life from a trance, and she stooped and picked up the fallen roses.

Wilbraham stood still by the lectern and watched her, every nerve stilled and rested.

She moved slowly down the aisle as if in a dream, collecting scissors and wire, nails and string, bits of stalk and leaf, and putting them one by one with mechanical tidiness into a basket. Then she slowly retraced her steps till she stood near him at the altar rails.

Wilbraham had not stirred, but he stood upright now, and flung back his head and shoulders. "You have made a Man today," his action said.

Their eyes held each other with



grave mutual confidence and understanding, the look of husband and wife rather than of a man and woman who had met only to part, with a small gold ring on the point of a sword between them.

"And now," said Barbara, "we will go back and be again as we were on our happy journey."

"Let me carry that basket for you," Wilbraham said, taking it from her, and they passed out of the little chapel together and walked down to the Sommer-Palais.

"We shall be late for tea," she said, "and no Zwieback left! What is a 'Zwieback,' Herr Knabe?"

It was not till the middle of the night that, waking suddenly from sound, refreshing sleep, she remembered the last south window.

The yellow roses were in a jar at her bedside.

## XVII

"BABS! Barbara!" Harold was shouting. "Where is Mrs. Wilbraham?" He came dashing along the passage and banged at her door. Barbara, dressed for hockey, opened it and faced a breathless creature attired in the orthodox "shorts" and "sweater" of an English footballer.

"My dear boy!" she ejaculated. "You can't be seen like that! Why, the police will interfere!"

"What!" exclaimed Harold. "Why?"

"Well, a German officer wouldn't even take off his coat to play tennis if a lady were present. You'll scandalize the whole town by that costume—or lack of costume!"

Harold stared in contemptuous amazement.

"I don't suppose any of you object, do you?" he asked at last. "Well, then, I'm bothered if I care! And as for Fräulein Luischen, I met her just now and she laughed till she nearly had a fit. Come along and don't gas, there's a good girl."

It was two days after the wedding in the little church, cold, sharp and au-

tumnal, a Saturday; and the Hockey Club was about to start the first game of the season. Only sixteen people could be beaten up who were energetic enough to play, and the ground, a rather undersized tennis-court at the back of the Sommer-Palais and forming part of its grounds, bordered with a few stunted shrubs and small trees along a strip of rank grass, was distinctly unsuitable. But tennis was over and the enthusiasts who admitted being victims to the "English craze for a ball" had started for the Winter a form of hockey which would have appeared ruthless sacrilege to Association players and filled them with a sense of horror.

The game was a revelation to the townsfolk generally, who turned out in force and lined the pavement outside the railings several deep, in order to watch these mad and violent English with their shockingly *unbekleidete* men and amazonian girls fighting with sticks toward some dimly understood purpose in connection with a little red ball which was rarely visible. The game was in full swing, with even the stolid Teutonic crowd excited into shouts and groans of excitement, when Fräulein Lotte came to the gate of the Hof, waving a thin white paper and calling, "Halt! Halt!"

Half the players stopped, looked around and dashed simultaneously for the gate, only to fall back disappointed.

"Mrs. Wilbraham!—a telegram!"

Barbara, who had stood still, stick in hand, to await the continuing of the game, came forward in surprise.

"Good for you, Babs!" cried Harold, seizing the paper from Fräulein Lotte and meeting her with it. "Some old Johnny's died and left you a fortune. I expect! Don't forget me what brings you the news!"

"More likely from mother to say she wants me to meet them somewhere," said Barbara doubtfully, taking the paper and breaking the seal. As she did so, some instinct made her walk through the gate toward the house, Fräulein Lotte beside her in sympathetic suspense.

Barbara spread open the sheet with its blue-penciled words—looked at it—and stood still.

"What iss it?" cried Fräulein Lotte in keen anxiety. "Chilt! Do not look like that!"

"Come in," said Barbara in a voice so strange that Lotte was frightened and slipped her hand through her friend's arm.

"My room!" said the latter quickly. "It iss nearest. Do not faint, Barbara—we are thay-er!"

"I sha'n't faint," she answered, still in that queer voice and with an expression that matched it. "Look! Fräulein Löttchen——"

She held out the paper and sank into a chair, trembling violently. "Read it! Is it true? *Oh, is it true?*"

The door burst open and Fräulein Luise came hurriedly in.

"*Was giebt's?*" she asked, glancing from one to the other. "No bat news?"

A queer, hysterical laugh from Barbara, and Fräulein Lotte thrust the telegram into her sister's hand.

"He—iss—deat!" she gasped. "Barbara's husband is deat!"

"Just heard from trustees, Major died Tuesday night. Details follow," wired Barbara's mother from Algiers.

In a moment Fräulein Luise was on her knees beside the girl and had her arms round her and was pressing her head to her warm, tender heart; and at the touch Barbara's hysterical calm gave way and she burst into floods of tears. "I can't believe it!" she sobbed, hardly knowing what she was saying. "And oh! *Mütterchen*, I am—so—wicked, for I'm glad, I'm glad, I'm glad!"

"Poo-er little girl," murmured Fräulein Luise tenderly, soothing her as if she were a child, and comforting her with gentle touch and brave words till Barbara at length sat up and dried the tears from her burning cheeks.

Fräulein Lotte went quietly to the door and turned as she opened it. "Do you weesh zem all to know zen, *Liebchen*," she asked, "or shall we wait?"

"Oh, you'd better tell them, please," replied Barbara in a still-quivering, tear-drowned voice. "And I think I must go to my room. I can't come about any more today. I must think."

"You shall do just as you weel," answered the two sisters quickly, "and Harold shall come and have tea wiz you, *nicht wahr!* He shall cheer you up," added Luise.

"Come back, *Mütterchen*," urged Barbara, as after bathing her forehead with eau de cologne, and installing her in her easy-chair with some books, the kindly, sympathetic woman went off to attend to her various duties. "Come back after supper; I want to talk to you about—something."

Fräulein Luise nodded, smiling. "Sairrtainly, I weel come. Now be a goot girl and *reat*; do not *theenk!* I send Harold!" And she departed.

The hockey players were all trooping in as Fräulein Lotte came through the *Küche* into the porch, and when, in answer to the eager, sympathetic inquiries, she made the brief announcement without comment, there was a simultaneous standstill and a gasp of surprise. Even Harold's merry, boyish face grew sober.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's the best thing he ever did in his life. But a bit of a knock-out for Barbara. And she won't see the bright side of it yet, she's such a rum old girl."

He was staring down at Fräulein Lotte as he made his remarks; and if there had remained in Wilbraham's mind, who overheard them, any doubt as to the nature of Harold's feeling for his friend, that doubt was set at rest.

"You are to go and have tea with her," Fräulein Lotte nodded at the young fellow, "and be vair-ree nice to her—but you weel know what to say!" she added in a lower key.

Harold rushed off to change and the rest of the group dispersed in twos and threes discussing the sudden news.

Barbara was in her pink flannel dressing-gown, leaning back in an easy-chair, over the back of which hung

her long, thick rope of plait, her feet in fluffy pink shoes resting on a hassock beside the *Ofen*, when her "*Pflegemütterchen*" appeared. It was nine o'clock.

"Draw your chair up near the stove and toast your toes like me," she said, reaching out a lazy hand and pulling another basket cozily up. "Now we can have our *Klatsche!*"

But for some minutes they sat in silence. "I can't realize it, you know," Barbara began at last, "not one bit. Partly, I dare say, because he has been as if dead for all these years. But of course it alters my position tremendously. And that brings me to what I wanted to say." Here she stopped.

Fraulein Luise patted her hand encouragingly and stared into the little red patch of warmth offered by the open stove door.

"It's very difficult to explain," was Barbara's next attempt. "In fact, I don't know where to begin—"

A long pause.

"*Mütterchen!*"

"*Nun! denke mal! das ist ja sehr interessant!*" observed Fraulein Luise, with a wicked twinkle in hereye.

"*Dummkopf!*" exclaimed Barbara crossly, jumping out of her chair and dropping into a little heap at her friend's feet, her dark head resting against Fraulein Luise's knee.

"It makes everything so different that I must look the matter in the face at once," she said hurriedly.

"Vy not leaf it?" suggested Fraulein Luise, with a very tender smile above the crumpled-up figure.

"I wish I could!" sighed Barbara. "I can't, though, because—" she stopped again.

"*Ach! these children!*" protested the elder woman in a tone of comical despair, and then quickly, "Don't you suppose I know very well what you wish to say to me? Leetil ostreech! It iss zat you and the chaplain are in lof wiz each ozzer—*nicht wahr?*" She bent over and kissed the top of Barbara's forehead.

"Oh!" gasped Barbara faintly, in

her voice a curious mingling of surprise, relief and dismay.

"*Doch ja!* Do you zen think you-rr *Mütterchen* iss blint?"

"But—how—?" stammered the girl in startled wonder at this proof of witchcraft. "I hope no one—"

"*Nein! Nein!* No one hass seen! Only Lotte and I, we haf not-eeeed many zings. We are vair-ree wise!" she nodded sagely, and her hand played softly with the crisp dark hair.

"But more zan the bare fact I know not. Now, what will you tell me, *Liebchen?*"

It was fairly easy after that.

"But the dreadful thing now is," ended the girl, "that I feel as if I could never meet him again. Tomorrow, at breakfast, for instance, we should both know everything is changed, and we shall each know the other knows it. *Mütterchen*, I can't face him! I can't! So I shall go off tomorrow to England. . . . I ought to go to the funeral, and I might just be in time; and anyway I shall have to get mourning, and—and I can't meet him!"

"Perr-haps it iss best," pondered Fraulein Luise reflectively. "Yes; I zink you are right. *Du kommst aber in eine Paar Tage zurück, nicht?*"

"Oh, no! no!" answered Barbara hastily. "That would be worse still. I couldn't! No; he has only a fortnight more here from Monday, and I shall come back when he's gone. He can write, you see, if he thinks of it. I know—at least, I suppose—it's idiotic of me, but you see I can't help it. It's how I feel!"

And of so little avail were Fraulein Luise's expostulation and entreaty that she was obliged to announce at breakfast next morning that Mrs. Wilbraham had left by the early morning train for England, not to return for three weeks.

The day was Sunday, and therefore a busy one for Brian. Yet, even so, in the pauses between the services, it seemed extraordinarily blank, and the little town suddenly deserted, silent, forlorn.

Who has not experienced this?

After the first stupendous shock and stunning realization of yesterday's news his heart had been singing a very *Te Deum* all through the night. There could be no regretting an event which struck heavy and wearing fetters off those human souls—the heaviest of all off the poor fellow who had forged the chains—and now won their threefold freedom. Death was to the major his own enfranchisement still more than theirs.

What it would mean to them! Wilbraham tried not to think—it seemed disloyalty to the dead—and yet he knew—he knew!

Then he had come in to breakfast and found her gone. Well, that was right. He understood it very well.

But now in his study in the quiet of the evening, his day's work done, he could have given himself up to radiant visions and tenderest dreams—and here was Harold, bent on an eager description of the meerschauum factories at Ruhla and planning an expedition there for one day in the ensuing week.

"You've got to come!" Harold said. "All rot about no time. Why, look at me! I make time."

Wilbraham laughed. Harold was a proverb in this respect.

"Besides, isn't this show supposed to be your holiday? Well, then! And what the dickens do you *do* all day? You parsons want humanizing—it's a narrow shave you don't develop into prigs. Most do. Though I will say it's not your vice. One would never guess you were a parson but for your togs."

"Thank you!" said Brian, much amused.

"That's settled, then. We'll start—" and Harold proceeded to details.

After an hour's desultory and absent chat he rose to go, knocked the ash out of his pipe, and strolled toward the door.

"Want a match?" asked Wilbraham lazily, his back to his visitor.

"No. . . . I say, don't you make any mistake. There's not a fellow in this world fit to black her boots,

but there are many that'll ask more than that of her now. . . . All rot about delay. Six years is long enough. Can't put in a claim too soon—if you mean to."

He jerked out his sentences with an obvious effort—and paused.

Wilbraham was rather taken aback. So Harold had seen! Who else? He moved in his chair.

"She knows," he said briefly, looking into the bowl of his pipe.

Harold said something short and strong, then hesitated again.

"Don't you ever be a brother!" he said gruffly. "Good night."

"*I know!*" answered Wilbraham, with a sudden vivid recollection of his own sensations on hearing of Maude's engagement. "Good night, old fellow."

Harold closed the door quickly, and a few seconds later the front door banged and his footsteps scrunched away along the gravel.

## XVIII

It was the Monday night when Barbara, tired out, returned from the funeral—for which she had, after all, been in time—to the Hotel Windsor, where she had engaged a room on her arrival by the Continental express early in the morning.

The day had been a terrible rush; a hurried breakfast, and then a hansom post-haste to the shops for temporary ready-made mourning.

She had barely caught the twelve o'clock express into the country, whither she had wired on her arrival in England and where a carriage was accordingly waiting for her.

The hour's delay before the funeral, which was to take place at three o'clock, was spent in a trying interview with her heart-broken mother-in-law and the two or three other members of the family who had come down.

The strain of the funeral was over at last, however, and then Barbara had driven the eleven miles to the principal town of X—to catch an express back to town. Now she was wearily taking

off her things, feeling thoroughly exhausted and ready for nothing but dreamless sleep.

But sleep would not come. She lay in bed staring through the open top of the window at the misty light from a street lamp flickering unsteadily on the dingy walls of the houses opposite. Thoughts were rushing helter-skelter through her mind—thoughts of the long bondage just ended; thoughts of the four brief weeks which seemed now to constitute "the Past"; thoughts of—could it be only last Wednesday? and of the Future which lay before her dim and indistinct indeed, but only so because seen in the dazzling glow of a radiant joy.

When should she see Brian again? She could not go back to Gotha—at least, not unless he wrote. Suppose she were to hear from him in a day or two? How funny it would be to get a letter from him! Why, she didn't even know his handwriting! She had never even thought of him as "Brian." He had been just himself so far in her heart and thoughts—nameless, alone, supreme!

Yes, but if she *did* hear? Why, then, she would go back. And if not? Oh, but surely he would write! Still, if not?

"Well, then, I'll go off to Algiers to mother and pater for a little," she decided, and turning over with a little relieved sigh, she fell asleep.

But Brian did not write. Barbara was too busy all Tuesday and Wednesday to look out for a letter. There were long visits to be paid to tailor and dressmaker.

"It would be silly to wear widow's things," she thought, "but I must be in black."

Her colored clothes had to be packed up and sent off to an old schoolfellow who was bitterly poor. There were friends to meet for luncheon; friends to dine with.

On Thursday Barbara was conscious of a faint, faint pang of disappointment when the morning post came in and brought a long letter from Fräulein

Luise, a card from Harold and nothing else from Germany.

On Saturday she said, "Well, I'll go to Algiers and start for Paris to-night."

But an hour later she decided to wait till Monday.

It was eleven o'clock on Monday morning that she wired to her mother to expect her, and proceeded to pack.

At half-past eight she arrived at Charing Cross station to catch the nine o'clock Continental express. She handed her luggage over to a porter and strolled up and down the platform.

A newsboy came past waving a big pink poster and shouting in his strident cockney:

"Horrible murder of British chaplain in Germany! British chaplain found stabbed this morning on church steps at Gotha."

The next moment the boy was terrified at being seized by a tall lady in black who shook him and said harshly:

"Give me a paper."

The shilling he received in exchange was some compensation, and there was more still to his precocious and depraved mind in the sight of the woman's face as she tore open the *Evening Post* with trembling fingers.

#### BRITISH CHAPLAIN FOUND STABBED

A correspondent wires that a man was found stabbed in Gotha early this morning on the steps leading from the English church, a short knife being left in his back. A servant-girl who noticed him lying there as she was returning from the dairy with milk fled home in terror and told her master, who gave immediate notice to the police. The girl declares the man to be the temporary chaplain (the Reverend Brian Wilbraham) who had exchanged for some weeks with the Reverend Thomas Rix, British chaplain at Gotha; but no information nor details have been received up to time of going to press.

The paper fluttered from Barbara's hands to the platform.

"I don't believe it!" she said aloud, and stood for a moment petrified.

The boat train for Queenborough had left Victoria ten minutes ago.

She walked quickly to the booking-office.

"I can get to Gotha via Calais and



Köln, can't I?" she asked the clerk abruptly. "Then a ticket, please."

She found the porter next.

"I've changed my mind. Please label and register that luggage to Gotha instead of Paris," she said briefly and unhesitatingly.

Then the telegraph office. Barbara's mother was given to nerves and must be notified of the change of plan. And she would have to wire to Fräulein Luise.

Is it true chaplain murdered today? Wire reply Wilbraham bei Bahnhofsvorsteher, Köln.

These things done she had just time to get into the train where the porter was waiting for her with rugs and bag.

All through that journey Barbara saw and heard nothing. She afterward admitted that she had no idea what happened nor how she eventually reached her destination.

Mechanically she changed from train to boat and boat to train; mechanically she ordered and ate her breakfast and saw her luggage through the Customs.

Mechanically she found her way to Köln to the Bureau of the Station-master and asked if a telegram had arrived for her.

"Nein! Nichts!"

She went across to the Dom Hotel and got some lunch, then back to the station. One more inquiry for her telegram before the train left.

The polite old *Bahnhofsvorsteher* shrugged his shoulders and shook his head regretfully. He was exceedingly sorry, but nothing had come. If a telegram should arrive later, might he forward it to the *Gnädigste*? No? Well, he wished he could have helped the *Gnädigste*.

And then Barbara was in the train again, speeding up across Germany in a state of sickening suspense which only her steady nerves and calm courage rendered bearable.

"It's impossible!" she told herself.

"Who would do such a thing and why?"

"That's quite explicable," said the voice of fear within her. "Coming up in the dark from the *pension* on Sunday night, he might easily be taken for

anyone else and stabbed in the back. Such things have happened before, and murders are, alas! common enough in primitive foreign towns."

"True, true!" her heart cried in anguish, and then hope rising triumphant again, "But why? there's no reason in it! It would be so—so pointless; it would be so unreal; so like a sensational novel; so unlike the commonplace, 'everyday' life to which Brian and she belonged."

Yet Fräulein Luise had not wired! And so it went on all the long, slow hours.

They flew past Cassel.

"Here!" cried Memory, stabbing her heart to quivering pain.

"How shall I bear it?" she moaned aloud once.

Still the great smoky train rattled and lurched and heaved along, every moment a moment nearer—every moment a moment longer since . . .

At last they stopped at Eisenach.

Barbara leaned out of the window, caught at a *Gepäckträger* hurrying by, and asked him hastily whether it were true that the British chaplain had been found stabbed in Gotha yesterday.

"Ach! was? der englische Kap'lan? ein Mord? 'ch weiss nicht! Doch ja! 'ch habe so 'was gehört." And he hurried on while Barbara sank back with whitening cheeks and despair at her heart.

And so on again through the darkening world.

The lights of Gotha had barely become stationary to her confused mind before she was out on the *Bahnsteig* and grabbing a porter's coat.

How she made herself understood she never afterward knew, but the man's amused stare and casual, "Ach, nein!" had hardly reached her brain when a touch on her arm and Fräulein Luise's voice brought more solid reassurance; and in another moment Barbara, strong, courageous, self-reliant, was clinging round her friend's neck and sobbing broken utterances of relief in the glaring publicity of the *Bahnhof* lights.

"You hat my te-le-gram? No? Ach!

it prob-ap-ly went to ze wrong station! I could not understand you-rrs! but I saw from it zat you kom tonight. *Dafur bin ich heruntergekommen Ney. Ney, 'z war nicht Meester Wilbraham!* zough zat ree-port was overr ze town for an hour or more! How came it to you? It ees so strange!"

She had guided Barbara into a droshky and they were clattering along the street.

The girl explained.

"Who was it, then?" she asked.

"No one knows. He was a student, but a stranger in the town and none know how eet happenet. Hees long black cloak made him to be meestaken for ze chaplain. It is vair-ree sad, *gewiss! aber nicht so schlimm als dachte die Arme!*" and she stroked Barbara's hand.

"No one must know I'm here," the girl said anxiously, as they went quietly in at the *Kuchethür*, and up the backstairs to her own room, where Elsa followed them with a tray.

"Then I can go back to Paris tomorrow and on to Algiers."

"Ve vill see!" nodded Fräulein Luise, smiling tenderly. "You must now eat you-rr suppair and sleep. I come no more tonight. *Gute Nacht, Liebes!*" And Barbara was alone.

And he had never written—not one word! "I *must* go on tomorrow!"

## XIX

THERE is a very favorite walk which leads one out of Gotha up a long, straight road lying between rows of tall poplars, past the *Berggarten*, to the summit of a low hill.

Sunday is the best day for this walk, because the goal gives one what is otherwise so lacking in Germany—the brooding hush and dreamy silence that lend an English Sunday its mysterious reposefulness. For on the summit of the little hill, a few paces off the road, someone has built a "rest," a queer little stone structure waist-high, wherein one may sit and look out over the wide tracts of gently rolling land cut by

long thin lines of poplars, or away to the vast leagues of forest, hill rising behind hill, and curve beyond curve, into veiled blue distances that seem to melt and mingle with the sky; here one may sit and gaze over the little town with its red roofs, and gray or vivid white buildings, clustering round Schloss Friedenstein, the quaint tower of the Margarethen-Kirche rising up among them, and here, best of all, one may watch the sun slowly dropping behind the woods, beyond the limits of the Great Plain, beyond the unseen choppy North Sea, beyond smiling, green-gardened England, which lies for our hearts like a mirage in the yellow sunset sands of the West. And as we sit there, the calm of an English Sunday sweeps suddenly and softly over this foreign land and brings that mystic touch of home that lulls tired hearts to rest.

He who made it called it "*Freund's Ruhe*." The Germans are a sentimental nation and snatch at opportunities for emotional enjoyment; yet, though there is nothing romantic nor even picturesque in the sight of the rest itself, even the matter-of-fact Briton, rigid in his horror of "gush" and scorn of "scenes," yields to the influence that pervades this little spot, and, yielding, feels no shame.

It was a frequent arrangement among the English in Gotha to walk up to the *Berggarten*, have tea (or, rather, Kaffee and Kuchen) and go on to "*Freund's Ruhe*" to watch the sunset before going home; and the day after Barbara's hurried return to Germany found her with Fräulein Luise slowly walking up the long, lonely road.

That good lady had sternly forbidden the girl to go to Algiers for at least a day or two.

"You are eggs-hausted," she said emphatically. "More traveling will make you ill. I weel keep it secret, if you weesh, zat you are here, but stay you *shall!*" And when Fräulein Luise spoke like that Barbara knew she had to submit.

"I do feel rather a rag," she admit-

ted, with a wan smile. "I don't think I like emotions much, *Mütterchen*; they're too tiring. I want to be young again—I want something soothing. Let's go up to '*Freund's Ruhe*.' Do come, dear!"

So here they were.

They had Kaffee, and Barbara honestly tried to be cheerful and sociable, but the effort was obvious. Why hadn't he written?

"I'm a pig of a wet-blanket," she said at last in despair. "Let's go on to '*Freund's Ruhe*.'"

"*Ach! Du lieber Himmel!*" exclaimed *Fräulein Luise* as they were about to leave the little restaurant. "How awful! I have forgotten something very important, that I must tell the workman. I must fly! Are you coming with me, Barbara? Or woe you go on alone? *Doch ja!* zat iss bet-tairr, for you are al-ray-day ti-erd, and I must hurree. Adieu, then, my child!"

And she was gone, walking briskly back toward the town, while Barbara after a moment's indecision dragged herself wearily on up the hill.

Just below the gate out of the *Berggarten* *Fräulein Luise* started and stopped short. There were her sister and the chaplain! Her surprise, however—which was for his benefit—lasted only momentarily.

"Lotte," she cried, in English, as they approached her, "I was just coming home forr you! Zere iss an imporr-tant en-gedge-ment for us in the town. Meester Wilbraham, vill you eggs-cuse my sees-ter if she leaf you? Where vere you going?" In moments of excitement the sisters' English pronunciation was apt to become somewhat more teutonized.

"To see the view from '*Freund's Ruhe*,'" replied Wilbraham innocently, "but don't let me keep *Fräulein Lotte*. I'll go on alone."

"*Wirklich? doch ja:* zen you go on! It iss pairr-fect today—I kom now from zere" (oh, *Luischen!*). "Go rright een—zat man vill show you—*Ach! Heute ist es aber wunderschön—* Ve vill hurry back. Adieu! *Auf wiedersehen!*"

Chattering vociferously together in German and with much inward laughter the two dear women went home, and Wilbraham climbed on.

He could not make up his mind whether to write to Barbara or not. One day he wrote, the next day tore the letter up. One day his heart told him she was longing to hear; the next day he argued with his more human self that she evidently meant not to see him just yet and that it would be not only tactless but brutal and heartless to thrust himself on her at present. Now as he walked up toward the little stone clump he told himself he *must* write.

Supposing—of course it was unlikely—but supposing she should hear that report which put him in the place of the unknown student? Yes, he would write when he got in—a short note just to show her, well—to show her . . .

He gained the top and turned into the little erection.

Against a clear pale sky the land lay bathed in yellow light, the trees and distant forest tinged with early Autumn tints of golden, brown and red.

All around was quivering silence, the very atmosphere seemed charged with a passionate peace that held Brian suddenly still while his eyes, half dazzled by the glow, fell on a figure before him.

On the opposite side a slender woman in black was sitting leaning out over the wall, her chin resting on her hands, and her face turned toward the stooping sun, which kissed her crisp dark hair into a halo of Autumn lights, copper and red and gold.

She had not heard him come—or, hearing, took no notice, for she did not move.

He held his breath in the first pause of stupefied wonder, and then the blood rushed to his face in a sudden flood of joyous comprehension.

Love knows all Love's secrets and needs no words to make them plain.

Wilbraham stepped forward, heart and soul on fire, and laid his hands on her shoulders. She turned, startled,

and looking up saw his face as he bent over her, and then in a moment, neither knew how, she was in his arms.

Half-an-hour later they stood together, fingers linked, their faces turned toward each other in the vivid crimson flush that filled the earth and sky, before setting their feet homeward.

"*Freund's Ruhe*," murmured Barbara softly.

"How little I thought an hour ago," said Brian thankfully, "that that walk was bringing me to *my* Rest—my dearest Rest," he added tenderly.

Her eyes answered him in eloquent silence.

"How little we either of us thought what that journey was bringing us," Barbara cried happily, "when we raced for the cabin and nearly began our *Freundschaft* with a quarrel!"

"But we didn't quite—thanks entirely to my tact and unselfishness which saved the situation," remarked Brian cheerfully.

"Oh, story!" she exclaimed. "You were in a towering rage when I smoothed you down with an apology!"

"That's one way of looking at it! Why, I let you have first innings! It was an unwise precedent to establish," he added regretfully.

"Don't worry yourself over that," she retorted with some impertinence. "The lead lay with me, sir; I had the whip hand from the beginning. Why, you couldn't even make yourself understood!"

"That difficulty was not greatly remedied by your instruction!" he taunted her. "And by-the-bye, I have

to tax you with a gross, unnecessary and an inexcusable LIE!"

"What?" she laughed incredulously.

"Don't prevaricate. I confided my young intelligence to your care, and you basely abused the trust. Why did you tell me that a *Brautfahrt* was a Sunday-school treat?" he demanded indignantly. Barbara colored charmingly and fell into a peal of delicious laughter.

"Where did you learn better?"

"From Neilson."

"The wretch! I shall tackle him when we get home."

"You're evading justice, at least trying to. Come now, why did you tell me that lie?"

Barbara stopped still and looked at him.

"I had to!" she pleaded, and as his eyes met hers he understood.

"Don't ever do it again," he said sternly after a moment's delirious silence.

"Remember, I'm bigger than you are—a good deal!"

Barbara slipped her hand into his, with a fine disregard of Mrs. Grundy's German relatives.

"I'm glad you're big enough to beat me—dear!" she whispered; "though you'd better not try, sir," she added wickedly.

Brian laughed.

"*Du wirst am schlimmsten daran!*" said Barbara mysteriously.

"What does that mean?" he asked with pardonable curiosity.

"Look it out in the dictionary!" she cried saucily.

And thus fighting, they swung hand-in-hand down the long white road between the sighing poplars.



## THE MODERN PACE

**FIRST BRIDGE FIEND**—They say poor dear Alice Lovelace is ill from overwork.

**SECOND BRIDGE FIEND**—Then she must have been frail at the start. Why, she has never played mornings as the rest of us have!

## THE PAYERS

By Catherine Carr

ONE way or another all things exact their price; though it does not always happen that those who pay are those who possess.

Mary Eldridge began paying at the early age of six. Something then befell her father's affairs that made the strictest economy necessary, and when the nursemaid was dismissed the care of the two younger children was largely left to her by the fretting, incapable mother, who herself, in time, came to depend much upon her elder daughter.

Mary gave a childhood and youth, unflowered by pleasure, to the demands of her family, without complaint, and it was a matter for astonishment in East Marshfield when she married.

She was twenty-six, it was true, and she had, somehow, managed to get her brother and sister educated and started in life—George as a bookkeeper and Lillian as a teacher, and only her father was now living; but those who knew her best were agreed that she would not have left him had not Burton Eldridge convinced her of his need of her.

Which was, indeed, the very truth. She loved him, but self-denial had been so entirely Mary's portion that it is doubtful if she would have deemed that sufficient reason for the indulgence of happiness, had it not been brought to her that his unstable brilliancy stood in need of her steadfastness of purpose, the support of her devotion.

"You could help me so much," Eldridge said, and his poet's eyes—he had the eyes of the poet if not the talent—made further plea for him.

So it was that Mary was persuaded

to accept what most women would have regarded the very doubtful happiness of the care of an undeveloped poetic genius; but all of Mary's affections had had root in the desire for service for the loved one, and all of her habit. She worked cheerfully, early and late, in the management of their insufficient income, that Eldridge might have the ease of mind which he insisted was essential for mental production. But death intervened before he reached his proving, either as success or failure, and Mary's legacy was debt, and her consolation a man-child, born a few months after the father's death.

Mary Eldridge sorrowed, but she did not repine. She had had love—it would be more correct to say that she had been allowed to love—but Mary was not analytical, and now she had her memories and her boy. She was sure that there were worse fates. It was true she had only her two hands for her own and her child's support, but this lot, too, she accepted without murmur, even though the struggle for existence was often a hard one. Mary's gifts were not the sort to cut niches, and her field of action was small. She took in sewing, working still, early and late, and comforting herself for the loss of the mother's rightful portion of happy, idle hours with her baby, with the bright future which her hope painted for him against the grayness of her present.

Robert Eldridge was early conceded to be an uncommon child, even by the impartial—uniting as he did his father's beauty of person and brilliancy of mind with his mother's more practi-



cal virtues. He was eight when he announced his intention of becoming a great man.

He had just come in from school and he stood before his mother, very neat in the shabby clothes she kept clean and whole for him, and with his face very eager and bright with his resolution.

"I shall be a great, great man when I grow up," he said. "We read 'bout Lincoln at school, an' he was a poor boy, too, but he studied an' worked an' got to be President. An' I'm goin' to work an' study like him—an' maybe I'll be President, too—or anyhow a great man—some way—an' then you won't have to work any more."

"Thank you, dear. How nice that will be," Mary said, pressing her tired lips into the lines of a smile.

"An' have—lots an' lots of silk dresses, like you made for Miss Pope," he added with glowing enthusiasm.

"That'll be just lovely," she glowed back, and she leaned over across her work and tenderly kissed the eager face he upturned to her. And while Robert, as was his helpful custom, brought in the wood and water and put on the tea-kettle, she let her fancy run far with visions and plans for the future greatness of his desire.

She had always cherished vague ambitions for him and now they assumed a definiteness which had its exactions. He *should* be great; he should have the full life that both she and his father had missed—her loyalty refused to acknowledge why this last was so—and somehow, some way, he must be fitted with the tools to carve out the place of the great—which meant education. The time, she could clearly see, was past when a self-instructed man could win. Robert must be sent to college. Mary made up her mind to that then and there, and in view of her design, she went on with another piece of work after the dress at hand had been finished. No time could be spared when such a vital thing as Robert's career was at stake.

This, thenceforward, was the keynote of her existence. She worked

even later and arose at an earlier hour, taxing her strength to the utmost, yet content since Robert brought home the report of high marks.

And the boy worked, too, singularly steadfast in endeavor and self-denial. He took no part in the games of his companions, nor in the festivities of his class when he reached High School. Study and work comprised the full measure of his days, but being gifted with strength and his mother's cheerful hopefulness of temperament, he grew to be neither stunted in physique nor of warped mental angles. Life was pretty hard just now, he thought, but some day he would be great and his mother could live in ease, and all would be well; and he worked steadily toward the goal so defined.

Robert worked for a year after he graduated, with honors, from the High School, hoarding every dollar, and at the end of the twelvemonth he and Mary counted their savings for the hundredth time, to decide that he might venture to enter the University; so upon a golden Indian Summer day he set off, the high courage of youth and hope arming him for the ordeal which the venture among strangers presented for his shyness and inexperience, and Mary was left alone to pause for a sad counting of the cost of motherhood.

It was brief, however. Mary was not the sort for such useless reflection when there was yet much to be done. Still she worked and saved, and still she had her recompense in the report of his progress.

Robert worked at the University to help with his expenses, which, in spite of his rigid economy, were more than his savings could cover. On alternate nights he fired until midnight at the electric power plant, where his country-bred strength served him well, and in his leisure daylight hours he coached some of the backward in mathematics; mastering double tasks himself the remainder of his time.

Naturally, he was cut off from the social gaieties which went on about him, and because he was young it was also

very natural that loneliness should sometimes press heavily upon him, and that he should long to have part in them. It seemed harder, somehow, to stand always apart here, where pleasuring came close, than it had been at home where his mother had been so ready with the comfort of her cheerful prophecy; and now and again he even questioned the worth of his ambition, weighing against it the immediate advantages of a position of the mediocre sort that he could secure. Still, the desire for companionship did not grow to intolerable longing with him until late in his Sophomore year.

Then its grip had him fast upon a Springtime night. All that day he had been meeting girls and young men on the streets, strolling along in couples and in groups, rejoicing in the early warmth, swinging tennis-rackets and chattering of picnic plans. The atmosphere of camaraderie seemed all-pervading, and he alone was alien.

Others of his kind Robert knew there were, who toiled in obscurity, but in his mood the remembrance of them was no comfort, and he had no inclination toward their foregathering. They could talk only of studies and of their tasks—of necessity a self-centred lot, and Robert's desire was deep for the pulse of pleasure. That it had never beat in his blood made it all the more a lure. The glow of future greatness could not warm his perspective this night.

He brooded, lax and dour, until the stars came out—it chanced to be his idle night—and then the sound of music gave him sudden inspiration. The simple window of his rear room overlooked the yard of the home of the head of the law department where the regular monthly reception, laudably designed to draw instructor and student to more intimate relation, was going forward. Robert, being a student of the department, had been receiving cards to the functions since his matriculation, but never before had it occurred to him to attend. Now he stood with his eyes eager on the shadows that passed before the lighted

windows, his nerves tingling a strange response to the melody that drifted to his ears, and all at once he was in a very fever of what preparation his scanty wardrobe allowed.

Yet when he was indeed within the well-furnished, brilliantly lighted rooms, amid a throng of well-dressed, self-possessed young men and befrilled maidens, he felt more alien still. He had a new consciousness of his cheap and ill-fitting clothes, the stubbiness of the shoes over which he had ineffectually labored with blacking and brush, and most keenly was he aware of his uneasy and awkward bearing. He had an impulse toward retreat, but this, he found, seemed even more difficult to achieve than his entrance. He had then been greeted with unrecognized courtesy by his chief, had the great man's misconception of his name mumbled to a perfunctorily pleasant hostess, and been left to drift to the out-of-the-way corner inevitable for the shy.

It was here that Harriet Kimball sought him out, intent upon her duty as daughter of the house, a duty which she ordinarily disliked.

"It would be only fair that I should draw a third of father's salary," she often declared, "considering the way I've had my feet walked on when teaching them to dance; and the solid hours I've been simply bored to death for the good of the department surely deserve some recompense."

It was duty, then, that caused her to seek Robert out. It was his superb physique, his clean-cut features and his youthful enthusiasm which made her neglect similar duty elsewhere that evening.

It is a little difficult to explain Harriet. Certainly it is impossible to avoid saying that she was old enough to know better—the most disagreeable penalty imposed by years.

She had had a somewhat conspicuous career as "college widow," whose assets, now that she was thirty, seemed little more than a large collection of "frat" pins and an avid appetite for admiration.

The latter for the last three years had gone unsatisfied. Other widows had arisen, and even to the Freshmen the fine lines about her eyes and the thinning of her contours were perceptible. It was popularly decided that her reign was over, and she was held up to débutantes as a warning example of one who had fumbled her chances.

She had come, indeed, to sad estate. All of her tastes remained for youth and the things of youth—the untrammelled enthusiasms, the sway of the dance and the contest of games—and now she was no longer a dominating centre among them. Her dance-card was not eagerly filled, she was not entreated to wear some stalwart young athlete's colors, and no boyish face glowed confused rapture at sight of her; things trivial enough from a large outlook, yet well-nigh necessary when their "use has bred the habit." She could not refuse the knowledge that she was openly relegated to the edge of things, and though she rebelled in secret she endeavored to give the outward semblance of being absorbed in intellectual interests.

To Robert it was as if a goddess had descended from a pedestal and given him the favor of her smiles—his unsophisticated vision did not recognize the touch of rouge which she allowed herself, nor the purposeful looseness of her blond hair that softened her sharpening features—and life suddenly bloomed to new richness, to colors that he had not before known were in the spectrum.

Confusion held him to monosyllabic reply at first, but Harriet's practised tact presently put him at ease, and little by little he revealed to her his hopes and ambitions.

"I want to do big things," he confided; "things that count in the world."

Harriet was prompt with interest and encouragement.

"That's right. Aim high," she said. "I'm sure you will win."

"I hope to—I'm trying my best; but sometimes it seems a mighty hard fight."

"It must—and no doubt you work too closely. All work and no play isn't well for anyone."

"I suppose so. Still, there is so much to be done—I—I have to work to partly pay my way, you see," he explained. He felt vaguely that until she understood his social standing he was receiving her graciousness under false colors.

Harriet's experienced eye had, of course, sensed this condition, and she was obviously unaffected by his revelation.

"Yes," she said, "many of our brightest students have done that. It is very brave and fine of one, I think, but there is danger of overworking. Some relaxation is necessary for one's best work. I don't remember seeing you out anywhere before."

"No, this is the first time I've gone any place. I—well, somehow I didn't feel as though I could spare the time—or would—would fit in, you know. For a while I was sorry that I came tonight. They all had their friends and—and didn't seem to care to get acquainted with me—but I'm glad, now," he added, and his gaze was of an honest admiration which brought Harriet's seasoned blood to her face and some of her old-time sparkle to her eyes; yet she replied with an unusual absence of coquetry.

"So am I, and you must come again, often. Don't wait for affairs like this. Come any time you're lonely. Father has some books that are not in the public libraries, which might be of help to you. Perhaps it might be arranged so you could have more time—some lighter work," she added reflectively.

"Oh!" Robert stammered a little over his gratitude. "I don't expect that—I don't complain, that way. But it would be—just more than I can tell you, to let me come sometimes. Things get dark when there's no one, you know."

"Yes, I know," Harriet assented, with a very gentle note of sympathy in her voice.

It would have surprised Robert to

know how well indeed she knew. Of late there had been "no one" and things had been gray for her. Greater astonishment would have been Robert's could he have known that this hour had its lighting effect with her. Harriet did not say even to herself just then that this was so; but so, in truth, it was, and she at once brought her influence to bear upon the task of securing less exacting labor for him. Thus it was that Robert was soon given a position in the law library which allowed him more hours for study and the occasional leisure for pleasure.

Most of this time Robert spent at the Kimball home, and it came to stand for much with him. The relaxation of music and of unaccustomed luxury of surroundings; the stimulus of encouragement and mental contact, through which his own powers developed new faces. Under the influence of Harriet's tactful skill his manners were molded to the demands of convention.

What their companionship meant to Harriet she was not definite about in her most candid moments of self-communion. Her friends had superior smiles to give to it, of course, and something of unflattering comment—things about "robbing the cradle" and "last resorts"—but her own attitude was that of a wilful turning of the back upon ultimate consequence. Which, indeed, had always been rather her habit; and her loves and friendships had also been of a changing order, but this proved its exception by enduring the remainder of that year and the next. Nor did her unusual constancy exist because, as was ungenerously advanced, there was no one else.

Still Harriet avoided analysis until the vacation before Robert's final college year. Then her unrest during his absence, her eager anticipation of his letters stirred her to a startled half-consciousness of the large space in her life that was given over to thought of him, and when he returned and again stood before her she knew. And the knowledge was announced by heart-

beatings as tumultuous as an April maiden's first recognition of love.

It was a moment of illumination for him, also. But there are illuminations of many sorts and their glitter is oft-times of strange resemblance, and the power to differentiate seems to be an acquired thing. And someone or another pays for it, too.

It was evening and there were rose-shaded lights and flowers in the pleasant room into which Robert came, and Harriet stood in the heart of the tinted glow in a white gown that was all lacy frills, and that emitted a subtle perfume.

And as he halted for a moment, his eyes dazzled by the transition from the outside dusk, he had sudden remembrance that all through his Summer of labor in coarse environment the elusive fragrance of that scent had come to him with a confused sweetness of suggestion; and then, all at once, his pulses were quick with the urge of youth whose will is to clasp and to kiss.

It impelled him to the daring of coming nearer and of catching her in his arms. Then he asked her to marry him.

Robert knew nothing of temperamental complexities. When a man wanted to kiss a woman it was, of course, because he loved her and would marry her. It was, as he saw it, a very simple proposition, capable of but one reading. He made it timidly, however, his words halted by acute consciousness of his poverty and obscurity; scarcely daring to hope that she should descend from the high place he saw as hers.

Harriet, brought thus face to face with a revelation of the inner recesses of her heart, was hesitant for no more than a moment. She pushed aside the suggestion of her reason and experience which gave the caress its probable proper place as the result of sudden contact—the barrier of her nine years' seniority, and all of forbidding college social ethics. For very well it is known that the allowed part of "the widow" is to train, to mold, to polish and—to refuse. To wed the product of her subtle offices is to be branded with more of the

reproach of failure than that incurred by spinsterhood. But Harriet refused the force of all these arguments, and gave herself to the happiness of their engagement.

She had rightful claim to him since she had had such potent part in making him what he was, she insisted to the lurking protest that was deep within her, and—well, anyway she wanted to be happy, and she intended to be; and certainly she was free agent about conditions. She was very decided, regarding the matter with her relatives and the few intimates who ventured expostulation and untoward prophecy of what they termed her folly.

This senior year of Robert's was a season of joy for Harriet which blotted out all incipient consciousness of her unwisdom and the half-regretful memories of her early loves that had, aforetime, claimed much of her thoughts. She bloomed to a new beauty and a transient youth under its glow, and had her triumph in the scholarship honors that he won—the honors in which, as he assured her, she had had large share through the inspiration of her encouragement, and her management in securing the necessary leisure for accomplishment.

But, even as every season of joy, this one had its end, and with the coming of Summer Harriet, like Robert Eldridge's mother, was left to sit alone and wait, while he gained foothold on the way to that portion of greatness which he still saw as a beckoning beacon.

Robert went to a small but rapidly growing city in a remote part of the State, to enter the law office of a Judge Livingstone, the opening having been secured for him by Harriet's father, who had roared objection in the beginning and had come to assistance, as was his pliant way with her.

Young Eldridge felt now more, if possible, the spur toward success. Not only must he work for money to care for his mother and for Harriet, but for the distinction that should remove from her the stigma of making a bad match.

The disparity of their ages stood for nothing with him, and he remained ignorant of the arts with which she made her not altogether successful defiance of time. Thus she was still the enpedestaled goddess and her condescension continued a matter for grateful marvel. And for a whole year these conditions were existent.

Then Feleeta Livingstone returned from the fashionable finishing school whither she had been sent to acquire the social graces which were suited to the position of the daughter of the town's richest man.

Feleeta herself was not overmuch inclined to the dignity and obligations of her station. She was rather shy and the simpler home pleasures were much more to her taste—she was really at her best when she had on a frilly apron and fussed about, making things—but Mrs. Livingstone had large ambitions for her daughter, and so against her will the girl was forced to "take the centre" in the series of festivities that marked her home-coming.

It was, of course, only the civil thing that Robert should attend these functions. He had formerly been resolute in his refusal to make one of the social circle which had been very ready with welcome—Harriet's training had effected an ease of manner that gave distinction to his personal attractions—but his position with the judge made continued refusal impossible. So he wrote to Harriet, telling of the first party. He was sure she would understand.

Harriet on her part was not so sure that she did—and then, a little later, she half-wondered if she did not, indeed.

Life for her had come to possess but one interest, and she had scarcely a thought that did not centre about him—certainly not a hope; and though she made no suggestion of doubt in the letters she wrote to him, she scanned his replies with eyes that were keen-set with jealousy. This girl, she had learned, was young, and at thirty one realizes the mighty, the ruthless power of youth.



Knowing, as she did, so entirely the measure of attention that is love's due, Harriet could not avoid recognition of any dereliction, though she for some time accepted the excuse of press of work for the occasional tardiness of Robert's replies. Even to herself she tried to argue that he might be too busy to write, but Harriet was not cowardly and at last, with the intent to cut to the core at any cost, she wrote asking him to describe Miss Livingstone to her. She had heard so much of her, she said, that she had much curiosity to know what she was like.

Robert wrote thus frankly in reply:

Pretty, very pretty. Small—she seems hardly more than a little girl—and sort of round-like. She has brown eyes and dimples, one at the side of her chin near the corner of her mouth. I never saw a dimple just there before, and she has the oddest skin. It is pretty, but it seems so thin and clear that it is as if you could see through it, and her hair crinkles up when it rains. But she isn't at all vain of her looks nor proud because of her wealth—her father is very rich, you know—and I am sure you will like her very much. I have not told her of you yet, for I have felt scarcely well enough acquainted, but I know that she will be interested, because she is sympathetic and likes to hear about all that is of importance to her friends.

There was more of the letter and of a more personal application, but Harriet perceived clearly its perfunctory accent, unconscious, likely enough, with him, yet very distinct to her, and she spelled the death-warrant of her happiness out of the sentences that were descriptive of Feleeta Livingstone.

The subtle sense which amounts almost to clairvoyance in women who love and lose supplied for her all that he had not said. That which he did not yet know was existent she was generous enough to believe. But it was—of a most cruel certainty. When a man took note of uncommonly placed dimples and of a skin through which it seemed one could see—the conscious blood that surged before his glance most probably—there was no loophole for doubt (and Feleeta!)—Harriet was critical with the name—Feleeta. It was absurdly unreal—novel-like, she considered. It was very likely that the

girl was no more than a simpering doll, yet it would not matter. It was not of import that she be brilliant since she was young and "round-like." Harriet's thinning contours winced as from a blow—and to no masculine mind was it necessary that she have two ideas in her head when it was covered with "hair that crinkled when it rained." Oh, there was no use in weighing balances that were so heavily, so hopelessly against one—youth and roundness, and dimples and crinkling hair. Harriet sat before her mirror with a blur of tears obscuring her reflection, but every defect was no less distinct to her quivering consciousness.

She went very deep into misery in that hour, but she brought out of it an impulse of selflessness that had no parallel in her careless, indulged existence. It was the maternal pulse which is the best part of all woman-love, and its dominating beat urged shielding him at any cost to herself.

There must be bitterness out of it for her—there was no escaping that—but there must be none for him; that is, none that should leave lasting hurt.

Harriet knew quite well that Robert would not seek his freedom, however much he might come to desire it, and to give it to him with the knowledge of its pain to her would be to inflict a reproach that would cut deep. After a long day and a night of painful reflection she evolved this note:

MY DEAR BOY [she wrote, as was her custom, though what followed gave the color of flippancy to the salutation]: I have been waiting for, and rather hoping that, you would come to see the fallacy of the old saying about "absence making the heart grow fonder," but it appears that the knowledge is not going to dawn upon you without assistance.

This puts a difficult duty upon me, and it really is a duty, for it is better that we should both understand our hearts before it is too late. Frankly then, Robert, though you are a dear, and I am really very fond of you, the prospect of our spending our lives together no longer appeals to me. I am willing to admit that the fault is mine. You have probably heard that I am proverbially fickle, but I do hope that you will believe that I was sincere, and that your welfare will always be of much interest to

me. And believe me also, to be always and sincerely your friend,

HARRIET KIMBALL.

P. S. If you don't mind, I *should* like to keep your letters. They are so lovely, and women, you know, are fond of souvenirs of the sort.

The little turquoise ring which had been the hard-earned symbol of their pledge accompanied this masterpiece of tact. And masterpiece it was, indeed. The blow that struck disillusionment of her was not the kind to destroy his faith in all women, and the salve for the healing of such wound as should be his would be at hand in the individuality of a girl who had a dimple of charm and sympathetic interest in his affairs.

Harriet knew all about such interest and its worth. Just now she had no doubt of its high value for Robert. It was only the natural thing that it should be so—and, by-and-bye, he would be happy and great with no need of her. And because life was now quite empty for her Harriet rouged more heavily and was so recklessly gay in manner that she came to be spoken of as a foolish spinster who clung to youth after youth had passed her by.

And the sisterhood of Harriet is not small.

Harriet had been quite correct in her forecasting of the mental processes which attended Robert's receipt of her letter.

His thoughts were, indeed, just at first somewhat tinged with unfaith in the constancy of women, and he had the feeling of having been cut loose from anchorage. Harriet's place in his scheme of things had become a sort of fixture, and readjustment of his attitude was not to be effected all at once. Life, he found, was a thing of vast perplexities, and a man's struggle with it was hard; very hard, indeed, when the woman he loved had failed him. It took the heart out of all things—out of success and out of pleasure—though it was also a part of the man's struggle to fight on and to give a brave front to the world.

It was unfortunate, he thought,

that he should have an engagement with the card-club which was to meet at the Livingstone home that evening. He had one mind to send the excuse of the detention of sudden business, but second reflection advised his attendance. Since it was his fate to live over this yawning space of loss, it were well to set about its abridgment at once.

He was so unused, however, to the wearing of masks that it needed no great penetration to perceive his troubled absorption.

Feleeta played a wretched game because of it, and damaged her reputation at the chafing-dish by a negligible rabbit. All was not right with him, she was sure. Half-unconsciously, she had come to take his expressions deep into her heart and to wear their reflex; and her anxiety now armed her for daring most unusual with her.

When the others were leaving she whispered for him to stay a few moments; she had something to tell him, she explained vaguely. Yet when they sat alone on the vine-shaded gallery she had obvious difficulty in voicing her communication.

They talked aimless trivialities for a few moments, Robert's abstraction being apparent, and then Feleeta grasped her traitorous courage and turned to him. The conscious blood was showing in quick flashes through her transparent skin, and the odd little dimple was extinguished by the gravity to which her sweet young face was dressed.

"Something is wrong—with you—I know. And—I'm sorry. I—I do wish you might feel that I—that I am enough your friend to—to tell me what it is," she said, her breath coming in little quick gusts.

Certainly was her interest most pleasing to Robert. He had been very right, he saw, in saying that she was sympathetic. He had not meant to whine or to bother anyone with his trouble; still, if she really wanted to know—Histelling was a little broken—the sudden breaking up of his planned future still had power to take him by the throat in spite of his acknowledg-

ments of what was the man's part. At the end he placed Harriet's note in her hands.

Feleeta was promptly indignant with anyone so heartless.

"How could she? How *could* she?" she questioned out of a very patent amazement. It was, indeed, in her eyes, the greatest possible marvel that anyone should cease to love him.

"Oh—well, perhaps she is right," Robert allowed with a sudden tolerance which had scarcely been his an hour before. "If she doesn't—care any longer, it is better to say so than to wait until—too late."

"Yes—I suppose so, but she writes so—so carelessly; just as if it were an every-day sort of thing. I can't understand treating—love—that way."

"No. Well, girls are—different, it seems," he said.

"I should *hope* so," she insisted with emphasis.

Robert turned and looked at her rather steadily. He had a dawning sense of her "difference," and it had a strangely soothing effect upon his troubled spirit. When he went back to his room the worth of life was dimly reassertive.

By-and-bye, as Harriet had anticipated, it became distinctly so, and the cause was again feminine; the feminine that spoke in hazel eyes and swift blushes, and so again he spoke of love and marriage—not so timidly as he had made his declaration to Harriet. It was quite apparent that he was high in the regard of Judge Livingstone, and Feleeta's attitude was of one who sat at the feet of wisdom, accepting his utterances as the last word of knowledge. It was rather the reversal of his relations with Harriet and it could not be denied that he found it very gratifying. Thus, in spite of his poverty, it was possible for him to speak with something of assurance, to receive Feleeta's rapturous consent and her parents' blessing.

They were soon married. There was no reason for delay, it was acknowledged by all, when her father was ready to supply an income until his

ability should achieve one. The certainty of Robert's ultimate success was, too, the popular concession.

So Feleeta's cup of happiness brimmed to the full with the delights of a home of her own to be busy about, a husband to adore and, by-and-bye, a little one to cradle and caress, this being the crown to her bliss—Feleeta had secretly cherished her dolls to an absurd age. She developed housewifely abilities which cleared young Eldridge's way of the household perplexities that are usually inflicted upon newly-wed husbands.

Robert Eldridge possessed the qualities for achievement: brilliancy, insight and initiative, and his progress was such as to speedily justify the popular forecast and his father-in-law's assistance. One after another the political gifts of his State were tendered to him, and when he was thirty-seven he was nominated for the United States Senate. And nomination stood for election in this State.

Mrs. Livingstone, to whose ambition her daughter's marriage had been of great satisfaction, came to Feleeta with a rush of congratulation when the result of the convention was announced, and, it being her habit to regard her daughter the most fortunate and happy of women, she stared natural surprise to find her with the traces of tears about her eyes and her mouth-corners frankly mournful.

"Goodness, Feleeta," she cried, "what in the world is the matter? I expected to find you perfectly delighted—over going to Washington. Anything wrong with Robbie or Mary or the baby?"

Feleeta shook her head, drawing the baby she held in her arms a little closer.

"No, they're all right. It's—it is—oh, I haven't ever said anything before—but it is just going to Washington that's the trouble. It's simply—torture. I never know what to say at those big receptions and things, and everyone seems to expect so much of me—because Robert's so brilliant, I suppose. When he was governor I

used to almost wish I could die rather than go through with it all, and this will be even worse—foreign people and that sort. I just *wish* there wasn't such a thing as a political career. For five years now I've scarcely *seen* Robert save at meals, and there is never an hour when we can talk together. He's always busy with his papers when he is at home—and—and it's awful," she said, letting her sobs at last have their way.

Mrs. Livingstone listened to this outburst from her gentle daughter, still staring. Her son-in-law's distinction was of intense gratification to her and she found it difficult to understand Feleeta. But, she reflected, she had always found it so and she recalled how she had had to be insistent about Feleeta's taking her proper social place. Unable to get on her daughter's plane, she sought vaguely now for platitudes of consolation.

"Oh, well, you know, dear, a career *has* to take much of a man's time. It's too bad, of course, that you don't like a public life, but then you should *try*. It is a wife's duty to share her husband's interests."

"If she can—I know," Feleeta nodded; "and I *have* tried, no one knows how hard, and I've always failed. I know that, too. I disappoint people and him. I simply can't help it. You may say what you please, some things *are* impossible, and social success is impossible for me. Oh, I do wish we could spend the rest of our lives right here and Robert would be contented with his practice—and—home things. It isn't as if we needed the money."

"No—of course not—but, dear child, a man must not bury his talents. The Bible especially forbids it, and—there are much worse things than having one's husband a busy man. Just look at Jeanette Norman, or poor Frances Lane. If you had such a husband as either of them you would have cause to complain—one a drunkard and the other a cross-grained miser. You can be proud of Robert, and I'm sure he is always kind."

"Oh, yes, *kind*. He's always that. He couldn't take time to be anything else."

"Feleeta!"

"Well, it almost seems so. He doesn't seem to care what I do."

"That's because you've allowed yourself to get into a—a self-centred rut. It does not pay for women to do that. It narrows their outlook and cramps their mental development," Mrs. Livingstone declaimed in her best platform style. She belonged to clubs and federations and Improvement Leagues, and had written some score of papers on the relation of women to the home and to the State. In theory, they left no phase uncovered. "You know I've repeatedly warned you against it," she said, "and I've wanted you to join clubs and get interested in public work, but you never would."

"I couldn't—I can't understand what they are talking about, half the time. It sounds to me as if it meant something else. And they're so foolish about some things—about not rocking babies and all that," Feleeta said, and she rocked the crowing mite in her arms a little more decidedly. "And I could not prepare a paper if my life depended on it."

"I'm afraid you would not try. One must make an effort." Mrs. Livingstone said this in the tone made historical by Mrs. Chick in addressing the first Mrs. Dombey. "One must not give way so to one's feelings—I never have. I've always considered you and your father's interests. And I *do* hope, Feleeta, for the children's sake, if not for your own, that you'll say nothing of the sort to Robert. It would be really wrong to try to get him to withdraw from the political field. Why, your father was saying last night that his nomination was the best possible thing for the State—even for the country. He's going to try to get through some bills that will be of the utmost importance—and Robert always wins. It is wonderful, just wonderful, what he has accomplished, and he's still so young. There's no

telling where he will stop. He might easily become President. Your husband is a great man, Feleeta."

"And I—am a very lonely woman," Feleeta said, with a dreary finality that left her capable mother, somehow, without argument.

Mrs. Livingstone's departure, covered by a voluble flow of aimless words, was an uneasy edging out of her daughter's presence. She told herself again that it was quite impossible to understand Feleeta.

Singularly enough, Feleeta received the sympathy denied her by her own mother from her husband's. Mary Eldridge lived in her old home, since she held that no household had place for a mother-in-law, though coming, now and again, for visits which Feleeta warmly welcomed; and she dwelt in the comfort of her son's generous providing, though she seldom saw him, and the visioned compensation of companionship with which she had solaced her barren years was never

realized. Yet her affection, self-effacing as all her affections had been, and the glamour of his distinction held her dumb, save only once.

She and Feleeta swayed in opposite rockers by the fire, then stitching for an expected wee one, and she spoke suddenly and without preface.

"Greatness," she said, "is like those vampire creatures you read about. It takes and takes, and gives nothing."

"Not to the one it takes from," Feleeta answered.

The two women who loved Robert Eldridge looked at each other for a moment of sad revelation of their hearts' empty spaces, and then they looked into the fire and spoke no more for a long time.

And the third—the woman whose companionship had aided him in his season of despond and had molded him to distinction of manner and cultured habits of thought? Condemned to irrevocable spinsterhood she has but his letters and her memories. But the nation has the services of a great man.



## REQUITAL

By Charlotte Becker

THERE was a time I thought, dear,  
That you gave all to me—  
Thy dawns and tender twilights,  
And days of melody.

But now that you are lying  
Beneath the wind-swept rue,  
My lonely heart discovers  
That I gave all to you.



"IS your machine a good hill-climber?"  
"I should say so! It is taking me over the hills to the poor-house."



## SMOKE, OR FIRE?

By Anne Warner

**M**Y DEAREST SUE:

I was simply paralyzed by your letter of congratulations! I never heard anything so crazy in all my life! The mere idea of my marrying again is too preposterous for words. I would not have known *what* man you referred to if you had not mentioned the name! Really, I wouldn't!

I am *not* engaged. Of course I wouldn't admit it if I was, but I really am *not*. I won't say that I wouldn't marry him under any circumstances, because I think any woman is very foolish to say that of any man in these days when, whoever you marry, you are so liable to marry others later; but I haven't told him that I'd marry him anyway, and I would tell you whether he had asked me or not if I could *see* you, but I hate putting personalities in letters. There is always the chance of one or the other becoming celebrated and the letters being printed later on, you know.

Of course I *did* meet him first at that house-party, and of course we *were* together most of the time. I thought that, as we were perfect strangers, we could be together without starting talk, but I found that it is not wise to be constantly with even a perfect stranger, because if you keep on being constantly with a man it starts talk right off, and the more constantly you are with a man the less either of you cares to have it talked of. You know how I hate to be talked about anyhow, and how hard I try to avoid it. I have given up so many things on account of it—red parasols and traveling with a monkey, and other equally innocent pleasures—that it does seem to me as

if I might have been allowed this one man, he really is such a dear, Sue—just wait until I introduce you—and *so* good-looking.

Now, as to these dreadful stories you have heard, dear. I shall take them in order and answer them *completely*. In the first place, it's quite true about the motor ride—that is, the most of it is true. Of course I *was* frightened and I *wasn't* expecting the lightning flash. And neither was he. We had stopped under the tree to wait for the rain to be over. It was one of those sultry storms and I was so smothered that I was absolutely forced to put my veil up. I was *really* nearly smothered, Sue; you know how hot those veils and storms are, and I was fearfully frightened, and he was no more expecting the flash than I was. It was all horribly unfortunate, and we never have been able to find out who started *that* story. I think that whoever did it will be murdered if he ever lets it be known who he is. It was so mean to tell, anyway, because it must have been so perfectly evident that the flash of lightning was entirely unexpected by both of us.

Then there is the story about my going and spending the evening with him, and I'm sincerely glad that you've heard it and asked me about it, for although I know that you know me too well to believe that I would do such a thing, still I want to tell you just what started *that*. You see, I went to stay with Carrie, utterly forgetting that he was staying with Dr. Kent. After I was settled I found that Carrie's husband doesn't allow Dr. Kent to enter the house, for no better reason than

that he *didn't* marry Carrie. So mean of him, for Dr. Kent is a dear. But of course it left me in a pretty mess, for you couldn't ask one man without the other. I was quite miserable about it, for *you* know how fond I've always been of Dr. Kent, and so one evening I suddenly had the craziest idea jump into my head. I was returning from the Croydells' dinner rather early so as to pick Carrie up at a Symphony Concert, and I saw a light in the Dale house (you know Dr. Kent had it for the Winter), and I entirely forgot that it was the night of the big medical banquet.

I thought that it would be such fun to surprise them both for five minutes, and I had unhooked the tube on the spur of the minute and told the coachman to stop the carriage there. It wasn't until after it was stopped and I was out and upon the steps that it occurred to me that the situation was a bit awkward. You know that I never get myself into a box, so of course I had to think fast.

I took my handkerchief and applied it to my eye as if I had met with some accident, and that made it quite right to ask for Dr. Kent. The horrid part was that of course Dr. Kent was out, but fortunately Clarence was in the study just off the hall and heard my voice and hurried to the door. He insisted upon my coming in, and so I went in and we *did* have an adorable time. I never knew that the Dales had such a charming house. If they want to rent it next Winter I think that we—I mean Dr. Kent—may take it again.

But I really didn't stay long, Sue, *honestly* I didn't; and I hadn't seen him for four days, you know, and of course I knew and he knew that it was our one chance while I was at Carrie's. I will confess that I *was* rather late in getting her, and her husband was awfully snappish over it—do you know. I didn't like him a bit after that—I always have wished that she had married Dr. Kent ever since. Fancy how heavenly it would have been! But that's the whole truth about the story of my going to see him, and you

can see how false it is from start to finish. I should like to see myself going to any man, indeed.

But oh, Sue, we *did* have such fun. I had on my new cream lace gown and he absolutely had on slippers—it was too cozy and homelike for words. Only we both would have a big, sleepy-hollow chair in that room if *we* were furnishing it. Such horrid, creaky, squeaky chairs you never saw, my dear; I was in mortal fear of breaking them. If I ever have a place of my own again I mean to have good solid furniture—furniture that you can take some comfort in.

Now to the next things that have been told you. I almost think that it is beneath me to reply to them at all. To think of people having the face to say that we are always together and that only to look at us anyone would know that it was true! It really seems to me, Sue, that you might have spared yourself the trouble of repeating accusations like *that*, for they show that they must be lies, and I'm sure I cannot see who could have started them unless it is Central or farmers who live away off in unfrequented places. I have made up my mind to *one* thing—and Clarence has made up his, too—and that is that we shall never, so long as we live, look at people we meet in the country, or remark on what *anyone* does or says. And if any man or woman is desperate, he or she, as the case may be, can come to our house and use the sleepy-hollow chair any time and for as long a time as he or she, as the case may be, chooses, and we shall *never* say a word, then or ever!

And now as to the tale about Paris, which is really apparently the worst of all to hush up. We are denying it right and left, but so many people know us that it seems well-nigh impossible to crush it out. I do assure you that I was positively in rags, my dear, *in rags*, and I made up my mind all of a sudden one day that as long as I hadn't a *thing* fit to wear I might as well run over to Aubrégiaac and get a new outfit right through.

I never dally after I decide—as you

know, dear—so I took my passage the very next morning and I sailed on the eighth. *No one* could have been more surprised than we were at meeting one another on the steamer. It was the greatest coincidence that I ever knew of, for he hadn't an idea that I was going. The voyage would have been perfect, only that the *whole* Lake family were on the boat, and I always shall believe that it was Mrs. Lake who started the story of our being engaged. It was natural that, knowing each other as well as we did, we should have been together, and we both were crazy over the moon nights (it was really very cloudy all the voyage, but we kept on hoping), so we were together more or less, and I haven't the faintest intention of denying *that*; but as to what Mrs. Lake said—well, all I can say is that I shall never really like any of them again. They stayed up until the most ungodly hours, Sue, and walked the whole time, and wherever it was quiet and a little bit out of the wind there Mrs. Lake would post herself until I wanted to cry. You know how few quiet places out of the wind there are, and then to have an old woman stand in one of them till after midnight! Nevertheless, of course it didn't matter as it would have mattered had we been engaged. I should think that anyone could see that, and I want to ask you, Sue, if we *had* been engaged would we *ever* have gone over on the same steamer? Wouldn't we have gone on separate steamers to keep people from saying that we were engaged—if for *nothing* else? Isn't it all too absurd on the very face of it? I declare, these stories fairly madden me because anyone with a grain of common sense would see at a glance what lies they *must* be.

We were at different hotels in Paris, and I had Madame Masjon with me, too, so everything was all correct, and I denied myself so much pleasure that it certainly does seem to me too cruel of people to talk so. We came back on different steamers, naturally, and then, besides, the dressmaker disappointed me and my frocks were not done, but

no one pays any attention to that fact. People who desire to gossip seem to have no logic. Absolutely, if I had known how they were going to talk anyway, I do believe that I would have returned on the same steamer. It will exasperate me as long as I live to think that I lost a whole week with him that I might have had.

I do wish that you could see my new things, dear—they are exquisite; much prettier than my trousseau the other time. I have hats and shoes to match *every* frock this time. And oh, my dear, my ring! I forgot to tell you about my ring; and I *must* tell you, for people are talking of *that*, too. It's some old family stones that I had reset in Paris. It is simply *gorgeous*. You never saw such a ring. I have a bracelet besides and I am going to have a necklace. They are all too lovely for words.

Indeed, dear Sue, if it wasn't for this horrid, confounded gossip I should be quite the happiest woman alive. I am very well and we *never* had such weather. To be sure, it does rain pretty steadily, but when people come to tea and it keeps on raining it gives such a good excuse for their staying to dinner, and I am *most* grateful that I am not visiting Carrie *now*. I am at Maude Lisle's, and she wants me to ask you if you can't come and spend October with her. I am going to be here most of the month and I shouldn't wonder if it was rather gay toward the middle. Maude is going to give some dinners and things and Clarence has a new motor, and I know you would like to meet him even if I am *not* going to marry him, as kind (?) friends informed you.

I don't want you to think from this letter that I am a bit vexed with you for having believed idle reports so quickly, for I am *not*. On the contrary I am sincerely glad that you wrote me as you did and gave me a chance to explain fully, for I think frankness is so necessary among friends, and if I were really engaged you would naturally expect to be one of the first to be told. But Clarence says that I cannot keep

anything to myself, and we have such a big bet up about that, that wild horses *could* not drag it out of me until after the first of the month. That is partly why these stories annoy me so terribly, and why I take so much time and pains in denying them. I would not have it get about for any money. People would fit the flash of lightning right in with that journey to Paris and my new things and this ring, and there would be no convincing them that it wasn't so. The more we denied it the more ridiculous we should appear, and you know how much I hate to appear ridiculous. I have always said that I would never marry a second time, and *I never shall*. And you know, Sue dear, that if I were really engaged to marry anyone I should most certainly tell you *at once*; so that alone proves the falseness of the whole story.

Now you'll come in October, won't you? Maude wants you to promise. I shall be leaving on the eighteenth or nineteenth—the date isn't positively set—and she says that she will be too horribly lonely if there isn't *someone* with her to talk over what will be happening then. You know how fond Maude always is, first of things, and then of talking them over, and she is almost as happy as I am these days. It was she who introduced me to Clarence at the house-party, so it seems especially fitting that I should be with her now, you know. The dear thing, she has absolutely her drawing-rooms all done over—isn't that almost touching? Do write that you will be *sure* to come. I want you to meet Clarence, too—he is so handsome—and do you know he has taken the Dale house for five years? I didn't mean to tell you,

but I'm sure that I don't see why I shouldn't. Taking the Dale house is no crime, heaven knows.

And now, Sue dear, in conclusion, I want to beg you if you hear any more stories about me to deny them *at once*. Say that you are *positive* that there is *not one word* of truth in any of them. I don't suppose you can deny the lightning flash because somebody must have *surely* seen us to have started it at all, and the trip to Paris is true, too, and my clothes are true, of *course*; but deny all the rest and fix up what you can't deny as well as you can, for I do detest being talked about, and then, too, I am *wild* to win that bet from Clarence.

And be sure to write favorably of October. I want you to come just as soon as you can—I have such a lot to tell you and I promise you that it's interesting. Maude says that we will have a love of a time when Clarence isn't here, and when he is here you and she can look all over my things together. I have *such* adorable things, stripes of lace and ribbon alternate, and hand-embroidered silk petticoats, and so on.

Good-bye, dear; *au revoir*.

As ever, yours affectionately,

NAN.

P. S. If anyone says the stones in my ring came from my grandmother, just let it go; I *did* say that they were from my grandmother *at first*. Oh, Sue, I go half mad being tripped up on things I've said and completely forgotten! You see, I had no idea in the beginning that people were such *awful* liars.

But now I really think very few know what *truth* means.



#### RELIABLE TIP

"BROWN says there is a fortune in grain speculation."  
"He should know; he put one there."

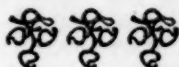
## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

HOW I have loved all life! The stars and the open spaces,  
Forest and field and river, canyon and mountain-peak;  
The clamoring, crowded city, the tide of the battling faces,  
The War of the World, the triumph of strength and the cry of the weak!

Life with its thrilling wonder—each wine-glass full of adventure,  
Love at the next street's turning, an engine-room red with romance;  
All of it beautiful, potent beyond our poor praise or blind censure,  
And never a half step backward, but ever a stride in advance.

So if the liars proved me their truth I would say, "What matter?  
It is enough to have lived here even this breathing space!  
Death is the last forgetting?—Bah! I am sick of your chatter!  
*Just to have loved life wholly was to have seen God's face."*



### A CYNICAL FELLOW

HOWELL—There are some honest men left.  
POWELL—Well, if they are honest it's no wonder that they get left.



### CHANGED CONDITIONS

MADGE—Miss Prim is always looking under the bed.  
MARJORIE—She would be more likely to find a man if she looked under  
an auto.



### EXPLAINED

PRUE—She claims that she tells only white lies.  
DOLLY—Pshaw! That girl is color blind.

October, 1907—5



## THE LAMP OF PSYCHE

By Ellen Duvall

FROM the car window Ruth Dekker watched eagerly for the familiar features of the landscape—the rich, level fields, the fine hedgerows, the little dikes and streams outlined by stiff, gunpowder willows, with glimpses now and then of the wide, shining river. This quiet country was like a pleasing face, comely rather than beautiful, and Ruth Dekker always returned to it with a sense of filial affection; here she was born, here she belonged. For in a mystical way we always do belong, she thought, to the place where our life begins.

The train drew into the station, and she saw Aston waiting for her. As she stepped upon the platform, they touched hands a second, and then each fell back to utter the usual perfunctory, "Well?"

"Oh, it's all right," said Aston easily; "just a matter of two heads being better than one."

"Then you do really need me?" asked his sister-in-law doubtfully. Her smile was deprecatory, but her eyes showed humor.

"Really," returned Aston heartily. "Isn't there something about piecing out the lion's skin with the fox's? When a man's perception fails then call in a woman's intuition."

"A thousand thanks! Then it is Gertrude," said Miss Dekker ruefully, as she walked with him down the railway platform to the trap.

"Yes, it's Gertrude. She's harboring some maggot in her brain, some devouring notion. Curious, how quickly her feelings and thoughts react upon her physical condition. That's why I wrote for you." He put her and her

bag into the trap, and stood for a moment giving some directions to the man. Ruth Dekker covertly watched him, as she had often done, wondering over the eternal wonder, how Nature produces her effects. Aston was a fair, large, heavily built man with rough-hewn features that possessed a rude symmetry of their own. It was his eyes that gave the granitic face its rare refinement and distinction; for the expression of his light blue thick-lashed eyes was so exquisite that it had for Ruth Dekker the effect of perfume, and suggested some flower in the crannied wall far up and out of reach. Miss Dekker herself was a short, stout, dark woman, hopelessly plain no matter how perfectly dressed, but very pleasant in voice and manner, and deservedly popular.

"And now what is it?" asked she, as Aston took his place beside her and they drove off from the station. "What is Gertrude cogitating over?"

"Me," returned Aston succinctly.

"You?" echoed Ruth in surprise. "Why, if ever a woman's heart rested in a husband, you surely are that husband."

Aston laughed and shook his head. "But no man was ever yet vouchsafed a thread through the labyrinth of a woman's fancy. Gertrude is brooding over me, but what it is she is thinking *about* me I'm at a loss to discover. You must help me." They smiled at each other in mutual comprehension and good-fellowship. "Of course, it's probably absurd from our standpoint; but it's life and death from hers. It's something I am, or am not; something I've done, or left undone, that's troub-

ling her. Straighten me out for her, please, or straighten us both out—there's an angel. Given the usual area of one human life, with the ordinary eternal relationships, and Gertrude can do more doubling upon her own tracks than any mortal man can conceive of. It's well I'm naturally fond of psychology, for my wife affords about as much as I can intellectually stomach. But she's interesting, tantalizingly interesting. I often wonder what new intricate problem her fancy will devise for her solution."

"How do you know that she is cogitating over *you*?" asked Ruth soberly, after a pause.

"I see it in her eyes. Oh, it's not a possession, not an obsession, either; but the idea, whatever it is, fills all the background of her mind. She looks at me—whenever she can trust herself, or whenever she thinks I'm absorbed—with a deeply wistful question in her eyes, an imperatively hungry question, Ruth, till I really pity her. Life depends, you know, on the way we deal with its necessary limitations. There are natures, like the great ascetics, for instance, that are only happy in the midst of self-inflicted torments, only satisfied in the exaltation of some monstrous, self-imposed renunciation. Gertrude is something like that, yet with a difference. Nevertheless, the pain she unconsciously sets for herself is part and parcel of her very life. Only sometimes, as now, she sets herself too much." His tone grew lighter. "So I want you to help her, to go with her where she cannot, in spiritual decorum, expect my company. That's as far as I've gone myself, and—there you are."

Ruth was silent, and let her perceptive eyes rove over the country. It was a rather rainy Summer, and the rich green of everything was part of a luxuriant peace and rest. The delicately scented moist air blew refreshingly against her face, and she threw up her veil.

"I've come to the conclusion that we've rather spoiled Gertrude," she said presently.

"We?" he echoed.

"Yes, all of us, her relations and friends, you and I, or rather I and you—to make the sequence correct. Naturally sensitive as she doubtless is, we have all unconsciously enhanced that sensitiveness instead of helping her to counterbalance it or to overcome it."

Gertrude's husband turned his expressive eyes upon his sister-in-law and shook his head. "But a course of conduct once set up is very hard to change. This sensitiveness—sentience, I should call it—is at once her weakness and her strength. If it were changed or minimized, she would be just that much less herself. It's part and parcel of her deepest individuality—her charm and countercharm."

"My dear Will, you, who understand her so well, are the one to woo her out of this corroding notion," cried Ruth warmly.

But Aston looked dissent. "No, I really have a feeling that for Gertrude the matter is serious. And I also feel that I can't help her. You may; otherwise, she will have to be left to work out her own salvation."

"It's what most of us have to do," said Miss Dekker rather drily. "I don't know that it's wise to pull off too many thorns for our—Gertrudes."

"This thorn will have to be pulled out—I see that," he answered gently. "Of course, it's of her own planting, but none the less she must be helped to get rid of it." His voice was very winning. "I can see that under certain conditions nothing, no one, helps her as you do. It's the habit of affectionate trust bred between the motherly elder sister and the motherless younger. Therefore I wrote for you: you never fail." There was a long pause; then Aston finally said: "Notice the hedges, how they've grown." And with this the talk drifted off to country sights and sounds.

Gertrude Aston was waiting on the porch to receive her sister, and behind were the three children, a small boy and girl, and a lusty baby in his nurse's arms. Gertrude was almost a head taller than Ruth, and there was no

trace of family likeness between them. She came forward, laid a loving hand on Ruth's shoulder, and kissed her warmly on both cheeks. "So good of you to stop on your way North; I've wanted you so!" she murmured caressingly. It was never of use to ask Gertrude why, in that case, she hadn't taken the obvious course of writing to her sister and inviting her to come. Gertrude never did take the obvious course—that was the least of her surprises—so Ruth smiled to herself, and said, "I'm very glad to be here," and turned to the children. They were almost absurdly like their father, robust, fine-looking, with his large, rough-hewn lines, light blue eyes, and the whitish hair of early childhood. They were shy little things, very well trained—Gertrude had them admirably in hand—and after moist kisses and limp handshakes the nurse led them away. But Ruth noticed that by the time she and Gertrude were half-way up the staircase the children had broken loose to run out after their father. "What made you think of coming?" asked Gertrude as soon as they were in Ruth's room.

"I didn't think—Will wrote and asked me. You know he is always devising pleasant things for people to do," returned Miss Dekker promptly. Gertrude looked searchingly at her sister, but made no reply, then she moved lightly about the room, giving superfluous touches to this and that, while Ruth busied herself before the mirror within whose ample depths she could quietly note her sister. No woman, she thought, ever better repaid prolonged consideration than did Gertrude, so tall, graceful, variable, was she; and none could more easily run the gamut from negative plainness to positive beauty. What was the charm which perpetually radiated from within outward? Was it a rare blending of body, mind and spirit? Her changeful eyes, for instance, no distinct color, just shadowy like water under rocks; her delicate, piquant features, her flawless skin flushing into exquisite warmth with feeling or thought, her expressive

lips, and above all the soft, murmurous voice, never fully let forth—that sweet, elusive voice completed her charm. But she's a clouded, not a fire, opal now, thought Ruth, for the flame of her beauty burns so low as to seem well-nigh extinct; then aloud she said, "You are looking rather pale, Gertrude; but to watch you is a continual gratification."

Gertrude contemplated her sister critically. "Put your hair a little higher, Ruthie, and fluff it a little less above your brows; it will give you more height, and take from the abrupt lines."

No one ever questioned Gertrude's artistic eye and taste, and Ruth did as she was told. Gertrude watched her solicitously, and then said: "In the country, you know, we dine early, and have a sort of high tea at seven. Will likes it, and I don't mind, so come down when you are ready." As she quitted the room, Ruth looked after her, amused yet dubious. "Yes, she is brooding over something; but the chances are even as to whether she tells me or not."

The days came and went—Ruth had proposed to remain a fortnight—but beyond the mere surface of things, the mote-like interests of the moment, Gertrude did not go.

One rainy evening, however, when Aston had been detained in town, and the sisters sat lingering over the open fire in the library, Gertrude suddenly said, "Do you ever see anything now of the Adderlys?"

Intercourse with Gertrude was never mechanical; she was too mentally alert, her indirections were too complex and significant, not to give others a sense of motion—so now Ruth paused an instant before pushing aside her magazine. "Yes, I saw Bessie Adderly at a concert last Winter. She said she had come to town for some music, and was enjoying it to the full. But I thought you didn't know any of them."

"I don't"—Gertrude hesitated, and then said, constrainedly for her—"they are cousins, you know, of Will's first wife."

"Yes, but have you ever met any of his first wife's people?" asked Ruth, surprised.

"I never have." Then in her softest, most distant tone, "I never want to." Ruth was silent.

"Ruthie"—with a touch of defiant deprecation—"do you think me 'small'?"

"Not at all. You are you, with your own individual feelings and ideas. Most of us, I fancy, are awfully tenacious, awfully jealous perhaps of our happiness." Then after a moment, Ruth added, "I can see that your heart is bound up in Will."

Gertrude made an expressive gesture, yet turned her face away from her sister. "Ruth, I am fearfully happy, happy far beyond what most women dream—yet it's the poison drop in my cup, it's like a knife to me to think, to remember, that Will ever had a wife before me."

Ruth made no rejoinder, but waited. She knew that if Gertrude spoke at all, she would speak freely.

"You were never in love, Ruth, so you can't understand—or were you?" turning suddenly upon her sister in this declarative-interrogative fashion.

"Does one who is, or ever has been, in love ever ask that question?" parried Ruth, with the smile that masks the heart. "But if ever I was, it could make no earthly difference to anyone but myself." She continued steadily, "So in speaking to me, Gertrude, it's like speaking to the deaf and dumb—you mout no feather, and you may relieve thereby your heart and mind."

Gertrude sat for some time silent, interlacing her fingers, drawing in and holding her breath, so that when she did speak it was in the short, broken gushes of an almost unwilling confidence. "Will was very young when he first married—she only lived a short while—and ten years elapsed before he married again. But he must have loved her. He must have remembered. Have I blotted out that remembrance, have I compensated for that pain? I don't know whether I—I—want to or not. Will is very affectionate, far

more demonstrative, far more unselfish, than I. When I do things for people I do them consciously, deliberately, because I think it right; he does them spontaneously, unconsciously, with a sort of fine instinct for loving service. But that time in his life of love triumphant, of love defeated by death—if love ever is defeated—what did it, what does it, hold for him? It is a sealed book to me. I have never remotely alluded to her, and he has never uttered Christine Adderly's name. And yet, with his large and easy openness, one might think that he would have said something long ago."

Ruth was silent. She was too wise a woman ever to question a wisely diagnosis of a husband, but she well knew what depths of silence the light ripple of every-day talk may cover.

Presently, with a troubled voice, Gertrude went on. "But does he keep this silence out of consideration for me, or in loyalty to her? Does he guard her memory as sacred, or does he think me—possibly—jealous? I almost wish now that I *had* spoken of her in the beginning, it's so hard to break an habitual silence. And yet, what would Will think if I should speak *now*?" She moved restlessly in her chair, and lifted her arms as if trying to thrust away some weight. "And again, is his silence a silence of love, or of possible disappointment? The Adderlys, they say, are all alike, shallow, easy-going, pleasantly material. Was that first love a disappointment, and is his silence, in reality, a noble fealty to an ideal rather than to an individual? I would give worlds to know his true feeling! And yet—if that first love was a disappointment, and he should intimate it by so much as a look, it would be a want of loyalty, and I should be forced to think less highly of him. *That* I couldn't bear; I had rather die."

Gertrude's breathless voice failed her. Ruth said nothing, and presently the wife began again. "Another thing, Will never relaxes a certain vigilance of attention, a certain sweet consideration. He, at least, has never merged

the lover in the husband. But why, from what does this spring? Does he think I need or require some constant objective reminder of his affection? As you see, he rarely comes home empty-handed; it's flowers, or gloves, or candy—one day last week he brought me a pink parasol. Does he think I need a constant reassurance as to his thought of me? Did he do the same for—for—Christine, or didn't he; and is his perpetual delicate attention to me a making up for some remissness towards her? All of us who are worth anything learn from our shortcomings and mistakes—did Will learn from that first brief married life not only how to win a woman's heart, but how to keep it? There may have been some slackness on his part, some falling below an ideal *then*, which he determinedly lives up to *now*. Oh, I don't know, I can't tell, and my brain fairly reels with the thought of it all!" She leaned back in sudden weariness, and put her hands over her face. Ruth studied her in silence. Yes, Gertrude was well-nigh incalculable. The idea of her considering so curiously as to have considered all this!

"You have gone so fast and so far, and have made so many turnings, as it were, that I doubt whether I have fully followed," said Ruth presently. She was on her guard not to show wonder, some disdain, perhaps, and more disapproval of this ingenuity of self-tortment. A more robustious nature than Ruth's would have scoffed such disquietude aside as so much supra-sensitiveness, as so much "nerves"; but Ruth, who, because of her physique and personal appearance, had never been supposed to possess imagination, knew that poor Gertrude's heart's unrest was poignantly real. And she must be helped in *her* way, not in Ruth's, nor in anyone's else.

Gertrude suddenly sat up straight, and opened her eyes. "What is this feeling, this love?" she demanded. "Human consciousness is a unit—are Christine and I in any way linked together in his consciousness, in his heart and mind? Is his right understanding

of me—for he *does* understand me, Ruth—based upon, part and parcel of, a recognized misunderstanding of her? *Now* he is a splendidly successful lover—does his present success spring from something of a past failure? Does he do *now* what he failed to do *then*? Or does he hold *her* in supreme affection, and is his careful attention to me a making up, as it were, for some inward lack? We cannot both be equal—that I'm sure. No man ever yet served two loves any more than he served two masters. Which is paramount in his affection—Christine or I? He might look into any moment of my life, and every nook and corner of it—he would find faults a-plenty, but no feeling nor thought that is apart from him. Is a man like that? Can a man be constant? I suppose here and there a man has been, 'I love once as I live once,' like that hero of Browning's. The poets— But women have lived what men have only written. If he had really loved Christine Adderly as I—I—care for him, her memory might have dwindled to the faintest star, but he never would have forgotten, never would have foregone the privilege of unalloyed remembrance. I sometimes think that if my shadow could be seen with the mind's eye, it would show the outline of Christine's face and form. Again, I say, what is his feeling; and what *is* the thing, the power, we call love?"

Her voice died out through the stress of emotion. There fell a long silence which was broken at last by Gertrude saying sadly, "Perhaps you think I have too much imagination."

Ruth braced herself. "No, my dear, the trouble is that you have too little. Don't look surprised or shocked—I mean just what I say—of imagination you have little; but of fancy you have a superabundance, as is shown by what you have just said. Imagination perceives; fancy invents. You have invented a very pretty problem for yourself which I doubt whether your, or any, imagination can solve. And it isn't desirable that it should. I am indeed surprised at you; I thought you



were better schooled in life both by culture and experience. It is hard to make the truth ever wholly palatable, but imagination is something that but few of us possess. It is a divine gift that perpetually corrects itself in the very process of activity, that is forever overtaking itself, and is equally forever continually forging ahead. No, indeed, Gertrude, imagination is a navigable airship, while fancy is an undirectable balloon, and you have floated far in this home-made one of yours."

Gertrude looked crestfallen, somewhat provoked, and yet rather relieved. "Then you think that there is nothing in my feeling, my thought?"

"I think there is everything, lots of human nature—feminine nature, especially—and old as the hills. You are not the first woman who has unwisely longed to look upon the face of Love, to see what and who the mystic visitor is and is like, and you assuredly won't be the last." Miss Dekker rose to her feet, and took a turn through the room as if to collect her thoughts.

But Gertrude, though with less intensity, spoke again. "Oh, it's not *curiosity*, Ruth; heavens, no! nothing so paltry and shallow and vulgar as that! But I do want to *know*, just to be nearer him, more one with him, you understand. I sometimes wonder whether I love him enough, and whether I love him with the best love possible. And then I'm half jealous of my very self; for it seems to me that the best love, the noblest and highest, wouldn't have to ask questions; it would just find itself at the very heart of things and would thereby know. Because I somehow feel that love and knowledge are at bottom one. And if this be true, and there is a divination, a sense, in love that I don't possess, and that I don't give Will—why, that makes me wild again, you see, to think that there is a 'best' that I haven't it in me to offer."

Gertrude paused, but Ruth still kept silence. Then Gertrude said wistfully: "I wish I had known him all my life. You knew him long before I

did, Ruthie. I was a school-girl when you first met him after the death of his wife, and you two were friends from the beginning. He has indeed what you once called, 'the hospitality of the heart,' that open-hearted affectionateness that invites friendship—I wish I *knew*."

Gertrude ended with a prolonged, hopeless sigh, and sank again into the depths of her chair. Ruth, with keen interest, steadily regarded her. Truly, she thought, the possibilities of surprise in the human heart are inexhaustible.

"So you want to *know*," began Ruth slowly. "You want to see him as he is, in his weakness or in his strength, as he appears to the eyes of his Maker. You want to hold him in your hand, as it were, to compass his entire being." Ruth spoke quietly, guardedly, striving to keep out of her tone either irony or pity. "In other words, you want to hold above him the lamp of Psyche." Gertrude checked an exclamation. "Oh, little, thoughtless sister, don't you see that if ever you do this, it will be at the cost of the very love you so value, at the cost of your happiness? You say that if you were forced to think less highly of him, it would kill you, or rather would kill love, which is worse. But suppose your perilous desire should force *him* to think less highly of *you*—what then—wouldn't your mutual love be equally jeopardized?"

"I wouldn't have him know that I am thinking these thoughts for the world!" breathed Gertrude swiftly.

"Precisely," said Ruth significantly. "Then despite your rash boast of a few minutes ago, there *are* nooks and corners of your mind into which you would hate to have him look. Gertrude, don't you perceive that you are thinking clandestine thoughts? And thought sooner or later, you know, crystallizes into word and act."

Gertrude winced, and was silent. After a long pause Ruth spoke again, and her voice was tense with repressed feeling. "Gertrude, don't you see that everything here is, in a strange and subtle way, left unfinished and incom-

plete? Don't you also see that all we have—every gift of body, mind and spirit—we hold conditionally, and that the chief condition is the way we use that incompleteness, the respect or forbearance we show to it? Things are begun for us, but we shape and color them as we will. And in all things there is something forbidden or withheld; or else we must forbid or withhold of ourselves. Man held Paradise on a condition, and has held all things mortal conditionally ever since. Love is a gift, and love is no exception to the law. Your own individual love bears this out. You feel that there is something incomplete in it; how are you going to deal with that incompleteness? What are you going to forbid to yourself or to withhold from yourself? And it is much harder, of course, to make and keep one's own boundaries than to observe boundaries that are set by powers outside. That is why self-control is the truest and finest freedom." She waited; but Gertrude looked doubtful and did not speak.

"What, then, are you going to deny yourself?" persisted Ruth. Still Gertrude made no answer; so Ruth said slowly, "You are going to deny yourself the gratification of this unjustifiable thirst for knowledge of the man you love." Still there was that stubborn and protesting silence. "Oh, Gertrude, don't you see that if you destroy the subtle condition upon which you hold love, you run the hideous risk of forfeiting love altogether?" Ruth's earnest voice held a note of passion. "Conditions vary, but there is no love without its conditions. Nothing we possess quite fills the horizon of our consciousness, of our conception. Every work falls below the idea, the ideal, of the true artist; all he can say is, 'I have done my best.' You then, by your own treatment of your love must fill out its incompleteness, call that incompleteness lack of knowledge, or—what you will. Love is held upon different conditions, forbearance, forgiveness, an infinitely pathetic patience sometimes; you are going to hold yours upon—what?"

Gertrude's eyes were shining expectantly, and she caught her breath.

"It's not really so much a question of the quality of his love for *you*, mind, as of yours for *him*. It's the love we give rather than the love we receive that counts. Are you, as a high-minded woman, giving him of the best? How are you going to complete your own insufficient, unfinished love? What quality will you add to it to make it of the best and worthy of you both?"

Gertrude looked at her sister with the dawn at last of a noble comprehension in her face. "The quality of *my* love?" she repeated slowly.

"Yes; don't you see that your desire to know, on which you rather plume yourself, has its root, like Psyche's, in self-love? Psyche wished to convince herself and her sisters—I'll take your word for anything regarding love and Will"—Ruth's smile was more than winning—"and you wish to convince yourself and—egotism. But, granted that any and all love is incomplete, what quality in your particular case will you add in order to round it out?"

Gertrude turned a radiant face upon her. "What quality? Why, magnanimity, I suppose, the withholding of the hand, the foregoing of knowledge."

"Precisely; don't inquire too curiously or unwisely. You began with silence—I don't say whether it was jealousy or shy delicacy—but having begun it, you are going to maintain it now from magnanimity. You are going to let Will's first wife and first love be. He has a perfect right to those earlier emotions, those primary experiences, and to whatever course of conduct he sees fit to base upon them. For rest assured, Gertrude"—and her tone grew lighter—"that while all mankind worship at love's shrine, women are the priestesses. Men may bring their gifts, but women feed the perpetual flame. And all must make sacrifices. Your sacrifice will be the gratification of a desire whose root, after all, is selfishness—not real love for Will. Now I have no license to preach, sisterling, so you will please put what I say into the mill of

reflection, and turn it out in any form you like. But—beware of the lamp of Psyche; it's deadly."

Gertrude regarded her with loving, happy eyes. "You don't despise me, do you, Ruthie?" she asked caressingly, and then put her hands over her face like a little, shamed child.

"Certainly not; the priestesses may be frank with one another, and may walk where the worshipers are forbidden"—she thought of Will's words concerning "spiritual decorum"—then added, "Women ought to help women; and men, men."

For a second Ruth's plain face showed marvelous beauty. Gertrude caught the fleeting expression, and wondered whether what she saw was actual sight or only fancy; but had she known it, what met her vision was the reflection in her sister's face of the ineffable beauty of the spirit of self-effacement.

Gertrude moved about the room in a free, joyous fashion as if relieved from some thrall. How young she looked, how lovely! Ruth watched her tenderly.

"Have you been sleeping well of late?" she asked. "Better try to snatch a beauty nap before midnight. I'll look at the window fastenings and doors."

"Well, if you don't mind. Will telephoned early that he wouldn't be out, you know." She kissed Ruth warmly, and went, like a contented child, away. But Ruth sat down to think. Presently she heard quick footsteps on the porch and then the turn of a latchkey. She went toward the door just as Aston opened it, and let in a rush of the moist, odorous night.

"Gertrude—the children—is all well?" His look and tone showed anxiety.

"All is well," said Ruth gently. "Were you troubled?"

Aston's tenseness of face and figure vanished as he exhaled a deep breath of relief, evidently just then sensible of fatigue. "Are we fools or wise?" he asked, with a laugh. "All day I've had it—you know the feeling—a horrid sense of disquiet at the back of my mind, a sense of something impending."

How truly sentient *he* is, thought Ruth, that he should have dimly felt the imperiling of his happiness—their happiness! "All's well," she reiterated, imitating a watchman's cry. And Aston's smile answered hers.

"I missed Sanders, but I simply *had* to return; so caught the 11.20. Gertrude in bed, and you keeping the night watches, Ruthie? I've had no dinner, and only an awfully scratch lunch. Any good left-overs in the refrigerator crying to be eaten? I shouldn't mind a midnight orgy."

They heard a little sweep in the hall, and Gertrude came in, radiant.

"He's hungry, Gertrude; comfort him with apples, otherwise cold chicken and tomatoes. I'll spread the festive board." Ruth turned and went into the dining-room.

"What a thing it is to be a man, and to be waited upon!" cried Aston gaily.

"And to be waited *for*," said Gertrude softly. "Which is greater, the joy you give or the joy we receive?"

"Ask Ruth, *after* I've had that chicken; maybe she'll know," returned he, laughing.



### SEEKING AN EASY EDUCATION

"**M**OST men learn only in the School of Experience."  
"Yes, and some of them want to take that course by mail."

## THE ENDLESS CHAIN

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

"YES, the house seems very nice—as far as it goes. But I never thought that my daughter, with all her beauty and talents, would be reduced to the position of a common drudge."

Thus Mrs. Wynkoop, tactfully, to Bettina's husband, on the occasion of her first visit to the young couple some two months after the honeymoon. The plaint provoked only a cheerful grin; for Ide was still in the early flush of self-confidence excited by the snatching of his Sabine woman from the arms of her relatives, and the ghost of a stormy courtship had no power to frighten him.

"Cheer up, Mrs. Wynkoop," he said; "it's not quite so bad as that. We have a servant to wash the dishes and scrub the floors. As for the chauffeur and the French maid, possibly they'll come later. You must give us a chance."

The lady, dimly discerning a hint of irony, sniffed as she turned away; and her son-in-law repeated to himself, for the ninth time:

"Thank the Lord, Bettina's not like her mother!"

The honeymoon, though following a wedding-day of tears, had been almost perfect. They had spent it at a little seaside cottage—loaned by one of Ide's friends—where the lapping of wavelets upon the beach made a sympathetic accompaniment to the song of youthful love. Bettina, urged by her mother, had stipulated at first for the conventional "trip," but had quickly been won over by Ide's arguments in favor of the simpler plan; and later, as they stood hand-in-hand on the broad

piazza of "Saxon's Fancy," she had told him how much better was sweet seclusion than a journey among noisy hotels. Whereat he, gazing down at her with the fond eyes of a lover, had congratulated himself on her loss of the standards in accordance with which she had been brought up.

No less pleasant had been the other two months. Bettina had adjusted herself beautifully to the needs of comparative poverty—to the performance of small tasks, the endurance of small cares. She sang at her work, and made jokes when she found her hands roughened, and her nails split, by the doing of odds and ends of household labor. Ide, toiling in his studio over the portrait of some collegiate bigwig, often wondered at the cheerfulness of her voice, lifted in the old ballads. He wondered the more because he guessed that she must be struggling against loneliness; she had few friends in Ware. And so he had assented cordially when she suggested that her mother be asked to come to them for a week's visit.

When Mrs. Wynkoop had caviled, wept and departed the ménage settled down for the long New England Winter. Ide worked at his pictures, and Bettina sang while she sewed; between times, they made love. (Perhaps it would have been more accurate to write that they made love and, between times, painted and sewed, respectively.) Then, one evening, Saxon dropped in for a talk and a smoke.

Saxon was a little, dark man, who made a livelihood by teaching English Literature in Ware University, and found his pleasure in writing short stories for the magazines. He had

been Ide's best man, and his was the cottage in which the honeymoon had been passed. Bettina had taken an immediate dislike to him—an attitude which he endured with equanimity, for he was accustomed to dislike, especially from women. His eyes held a gleam of knowledge which invariably repelled those of the Fair Sex whom it did not conspicuously attract; there were no indifferent entries on his feminine list. The only woman ever truly loved by him had died, and her death had made his tragedy. He was of the minority who cannot forget, was Saxon, but few people would have suspected his sorrow from his conversation.

"Why haven't you been around before?" Ide demanded, as soon as he and his friend had been deserted by Bettina.

"Look into your own heart for the answer. Have you had any use for me, lately?"

Ide grinned somewhat sheepishly.

"Rot!" he protested. "We should have been glad to see you at any time."

"We?" murmured Saxon, the skin crinkling at the corners of his eyes. "How soon the machine puts its stamp upon the man! He says 'we' already."

"Don't be so infernally critical," Ide complained. "You know—"

"There's no need for you to explain," the other interrupted. "I wasn't criticizing; I was merely stating the fact. You're no longer a man—you're simply a very small part of a 'we.' And you don't even realize how many other parts the 'we' has."

The host held up a finger.

"One!" he said grimly. "One other part—and only one."

Saxon was not disturbed.

"Just so," said he, "just so. But, my dear fellow, that one other part is herself a part of an intricate system, which, try as you may, you won't be able to ignore. You have practically no living relatives; but Mrs. Ide has. You've become a cog in the Wynkoop machine, that's all."

"Bettina," returned Ide rather stiffly, "is different from the rest of the Wynkoops."

"I shall quote at you a speech from a play," said Saxon. "'Wait until she's forty years old!'"

They smoked for a moment in silence. Then Ide remarked:

"For true encouragement, there's nothing like an old friend."

"What's an old friend for, except to tell unpleasant truths that no mere acquaintance would dare to utter?"

Another pause—ended by Saxon.

"Far be it from me to be unduly gloomy, Jim," he said, "but I feel a bit sad over the parting of our ways. We've been pretty good pals, you and I."

"Well, why shouldn't we go on being good pals?"

"Because you have succumbed to Nature, while I, resisting her, am by way of being an outcast. In future, we shall differ as radically as the romancer differs from the realist."

Ide shrugged irritably.

"Good God, Jack!" he exclaimed.

"Do you think that marriage robs a man of his reason, as well as of his independence?"

"Certainly not; it only shifts his viewpoint—feminizes him. He has yielded to Nature, and Nature is feminine—as witness her laws in their lovely lack of logic. She demands her price. It's nothing but another demonstration of the truth of the old adage, 'Woe to the conquered!'"

"Worse and worse! And have you any advice to give to the conquered, O sapient outcast?"

"Advice? Yes, of course I've advice to give; everybody has. Advice is the cheapest thing in the world. Mine to you is three-fold: First, remain obscure; he that is widely known is at the mercy of his fame. Secondly, don't turn your home into a hostelry; no house was ever built big enough to hold more than two generations. Thirdly, cultivate your imaginative side, for in it you'll always be able to find a lonely refuge. The women can't follow you there; they have no imagination."

"Perhaps," said Ide, "that is why they manage to be happier than we."

"I dare say. At any rate, a number



of clever people have stated it as a fact."

"Your brain is a regular storehouse for quotations."

"So is the brain of any other penny-a-liner. We only give new settings to old thoughts—and frequently fail to credit the original thinkers."

That night, after his wife had dropped off into slumber, Ide lay awake for hours, thinking of his friend's comments. And the next morning he began Bettina's portrait—the portrait which should show her in her most joyous mood, with the love-light in her eyes. Whatever happened—no matter what metamorphosis might be accomplished in her by the changing years—he would always have the painting to remind him of the days when she had been completely his.

It was while they were hanging the finished picture, to the tune of many kisses, that the telegram announcing Wynkoop's death arrived. The news was not entirely unexpected, for the old gentleman had been in indifferent health for some time, and had been warned repeatedly by his physician that apoplexy was hanging over him, but the shock of Bettina's sorrow was none the less keen. She rallied bravely for the journey, however, and supported her mother through the gruesome funeral ordeal.

Another ordeal was in store for Mrs. Wynkoop. When the dead man's papers were examined it developed that he had left practically nothing. He had lived high, and run through his inherited fortune. His life insurance barely covered his debts.

The widow, reduced by this second blow to a condition in which nerves predominated over intellect, proclaimed her unhappiness to the four winds. She averred that she had been betrayed by everybody whom she had trusted; that nobody loved her; that she would go forth into the cold world to earn her living as a housekeeper. Repulsing all efforts to comfort her, she retired to her room.

"I think," said Bettina, in consultation with Ide, "that she'll be more rea-

sonable after a while. Of course, the housekeeper idea is quite absurd; mama could never endure a menial position. The disgrace would kill her."

"I fail to see the disgrace," he returned drily, "but I'll admit that it's out of the question for her to think of becoming a housekeeper. She couldn't hold the job for half an hour. That doesn't affect the main issue, though. The issue is, What's to be done? Where is your mother to go?"

"She might live with my uncle." Bettina's tone was slightly dubious.

"But I thought that she and your uncle's wife were—ah—incompatible."

"They are. Mama and Aunt Estelle never did agree."

Ide heaved a noiseless sigh.

"Let her come to us, then."

Bettina met his glance.

"That's awfully good of you, Jim," she said. "I'm afraid, though, that there would be trouble. Mama doesn't—mama isn't—well, mama's not the easiest person in the world to get along with."

"Neither am I, but doubtless we can manage, with mutual forbearance. We may as well try it, anyhow; for even if this hadn't happened, you'd have wanted her with you in September."

"Yes," said Bettina, "I should have wanted her with me—in September."

The Ides' daughter, arriving in the Autumn, was capricious according to the season of her birth. She howled lustily at her advent, and kept it up almost without intermission during the first few months of her existence. Her male parent thought it strange that so much noise could emanate from so small a body. Not so the mother; Bettina accepted her baby, from the beginning, as the most natural and perfect child that had ever breathed the breath of life. Mrs. Wynkoop, too, regarded the newcomer as a very paragon of female babydom.

"Mother-in-law," thought Ide, "behaves as though she had been an active contributor to this deed of ours. One might imagine that she herself had

brought forth offspring in her old age."

And in truth, with the coming of her grandchild, Mrs. Wynkoop had arisen from a place of protesting dependence to one of directing governorship in the household. Her manner had taken on a new aplomb—a fresh phase of the dictatorial. Ide found his goings-out and his comings-in put under a rigorous surveillance. He was reprimanded for neglect, or scolded for over-attention, as the case might be. His studio was requisitioned to serve as a nursery, and he was told to make the best of the garret. What right had he to the use of the largest room in the house? He would better turn his mind away from luxuries, and begin to earn more money. The business of paternity, he was given to understand, was not altogether one of congratulations and pride.

Mrs. Wynkoop subsided somewhat as her daughter grew stronger. But Bettina herself had changed; whereas, in the beginning, she had had two thoughts for her child and two for her husband, she now had one for him and three for the child. Ide was not of an especially jealous temper, yet because the baby was entirely a secondary consideration with him, his wife's attitude aroused his wonder. Some women, he knew, were incapable of loving two people equally. To mention an extreme example: Mrs. Wynkoop, after the birth of Bettina, had regarded her spouse as nothing more than a personified cheque-book.

"Can it be possible," he asked himself, "that Bettina is going to be like her mother, after all?"

The child passed successfully through the howling stage, thrived, and grew. Almost before her father realized that she was an active entity she had arrived at the period when her education became a problem. The first steps of this problem were solved by Bettina and Mrs. Wynkoop; Ide, unlike most people, had absolutely no theories anent the rearing of children. When, however, it was decided in due course of time to send the hobbled-

hoy Marian to a particularly costly finishing school, he entered a protest.

"I see no necessity for spending so much money on her," he told Bettina. "She's a poor man's daughter, and ought to be taught that there are some things which she can't have. Why not send her to a school where she'll learn something useful? She may have to get her own living some day."

"My plans for Marian do not include the learning of a profession," replied Bettina calmly. "She may be a poor man's daughter, but she was also born a gentlewoman."

"Ah! That sentiment, I take it, is inherited?"

"Please don't sneer at mama. She has Marian's best interests at heart."

Ide laughed.

"I don't doubt your mother's unselfishness," he said, "but she isn't wearing last year's dresses for the sake of it. I notice that you are."

"If I choose to deny myself on my daughter's account, that is my affair."

"And mine. I pay the girl's reasonable expenses, and I'm not willing to have you use for her the money which I give you for yourself."

It was Bettina's turn to laugh.

"Really, Jim, I don't see how you can stop me."

Marian attended the costly finishing school. Ide smiled sarcastically when the bills came in, but met them without a murmur. He also contrived to increase his wife's personal allowance, so that the extra dollars which she sent to the girl should not leave her without pin money. It gave him a kind of grim pleasure to feel that Bettina, who took so independent a stand, was really dependent on him for the benefits which she bestowed with such rashness. He did not, however, flatter himself that he was being remarkably generous.

"The Lord knows she's entitled to the paltry shekels," he said. "She's been a good wife."

But in order to obtain the paltry shekels he had to tie himself to his easel with unrelenting persistence. It became necessary to extend his reputation beyond the purely local sphere;

for the earning capacity of a portrait-painter in Ware was limited. He branched out into illustrating, and, in a couple of years, made a modest hit thereby. Success brought added trade—to such an extent, in fact, that he began to feel as though the business were running him. In a very small way he was like the financier who has accumulated so large a fortune that he is a slave to it. Sometimes, when exhausted by long hours of artistic concentration, he thought of Saxon's advice: "Remain obscure; he that is widely known is at the mercy of his fame."

"Now, how the deuce," he would argue querulously, "is an artist with a family on his hands to remain obscure?"

And back he would go to his drawing-board, while Bettina, downstairs, was receiving a caller's felicitations on his increasing glory. . . . He did not see much of Saxon in those days. They met at the Brush and Pen Club occasionally, but avoided personal conversation. They even eschewed discussions of art. As Saxon—now gray as a badger—said:

"I don't care for your pictures, and you don't read my stories, so what's the use? Let's talk baseball."

Marian's return from the finishing school marked the opening of a vigorous social campaign, in which the girl participated with the enthusiasm of youth, Bettina with maternal determination and Mrs. Wynkoop with resurrected glee. Ide, paying for the army's equipment, watched the warfare curiously. It seemed a strange thing to him that he was already the father of a marriageable daughter. He often looked at the mirrored image of his bald pate, and wondered whether he might not be dreaming—whether, in reality, he could be forty-odd years old. The time had passed so swiftly. And when he heard young men asking at the door for "Miss Ide" he wanted to call out to them: "Go home, children! This is no time o' night for little boys to be out alone."

They amused him inexpressibly,

those young men. Could he himself have been as callow as they, at two-and-twenty? He tried to put them at their ease, and only succeeded in embarrassing them. Clearly, they looked upon him as a being from another world, half awe-inspiring, half pitiable.

The suitors were not all youths, however. Among the devotees who bowed at Marian's shrine Ide was surprised to see two or three men of his own generation. There was, for instance, Marvin Holland, who had resisted assaults upon his well-garnished single blessedness for several decades. Marvin had been succinctly described as the richest man and biggest jackass in Ware; he possessed a smile to make the angels weep. Concerning him, the artist took the liberty of addressing Bettina.

"Is the happiness of Marian dependent on Marvin Holland's attentions?" he inquired mildly.

"Not that I know of," she mumbled, her mouth full of pins. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking of a club riddle of half-a-dozen years ago. 'What's the difference between General Joubert and Marvin Holland?' was the question. And the answer was: 'One's a Boer general, and the other's a general bore.'"

Bettina removed the pins.

"I think that riddle was quite uncalled for. I like Mr. Holland very much."

"And are you—er—considering him as a matrimonial possibility?"

"I haven't the remotest idea what Marian thinks about him."

"Bettina, Bettina! Don't you know where you'll go when you die, if you say things like that?" Smiling, he took her hand. "For my sake, dear, don't marry the girl off to that dub; I'd hate to see my grandchildren focus Marvin's grin on me. Let her marry somebody who acts like a human being, even if he doesn't count his coin by stacks. It's not the worst thing in the world to be poor. You and I have been happy enough, eh?"

Despite herself, she smiled in answer;

she even returned the pressure of his hand.

"You're a ridiculous old Jim," she said. "Yes, we've been happy enough. But—don't you see, my dear?—I want Marian to have the advantages that we didn't have. I want her to be both happy and rich."

"All of Marvin's money wouldn't make up for the way he hisses over his soup. She'd have to see him at dinner, you know."

"If you're going to be flippant, there's no use in talking to you."

"I never was less flippant in my life. It's only that I'm constitutionally unable to treat Marvin in as dignified a way as he treats himself."

"Perhaps you'll learn to like him better when you come into closer contact with him."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Ide gloomily. "The width of the street is the closest I want to come to him."

As he left the room, the thought struck him that all of his conferences with his wife ended in the same manner: irritably on his part, unyieldingly on hers. Her stubbornness had become a mania, while he had grown unreasonably cynical and short-tempered. They could no longer find a common ground on which to meet.

The social campaign, increasing in pace, drew toward the decisive struggle. There was in the domestic atmosphere a certain tenseness, indicative of great events to come. Bettina and her daughter commenced to show signs of the strain, Mrs. Wynkoop alone remaining bright-eyed. In these conditions the nominal master of the house began to feel his sympathy go out to the youngest of the combatants, who seemed by way of becoming the bone of contention, rather than an active factor.

Marian responded shyly to this tacit sympathy. Occasionally she invaded the garret studio of a morning, and stood by the artist's side while he painted. Or she would stretch out on the divan with a novel, glancing up now and then when she thought herself unobserved. If her father happened to

intercept such a glance, he smiled; he understood that she was wondering what sort of man he was—the ironical, stoop-shouldered creature who snarled if the eggs were cold, but who appeared to be harmless, and even pleasant, provided that one approached him without making too much noise. It rather tickled him thus to be appraised. He surprised her one day by presenting her with a charcoal sketch which he had dashed off during one of her intervals of absorption in the romantic fortunes of Sir Reginald Montmorency and the beautiful Eglantine Orme.

"Father, how nice of you!" she cried. "It's ever so pretty—much prettier than I really am. Just imagine my having my portrait done by so famous an artist as my father! But!"—she looked curiously at the sketch—"it makes me think of something else—some picture that I've seen before. Oh, yes, I know! It's your portrait of mother, that hangs downstairs in the drawing-room."

"Yes," said Ide, "you're very like your mother, as she was at your age."

"But my photographs don't look anything like her old ones."

"Ah, my dear, I haven't the honor to be a human camera! The photographer's plate records clothes and a fixed grin; I can only paint the things of the spirit."

After that day he could have warned Bettina of the impending damage to her plans, had he chosen to do so. He did not know, it is true, which of the attendant swains was responsible for the love-light that had glimmered in his daughter's eyes as she read of Eglantine and her enamoured Reginald; but he felt reasonably sure that he would not be forced to accept Holland as a son-in-law. Young Sterrett might have set that light aglow, or Tom Lemaitre; never the prosaic Marvin. The decisive battle had been fought without Bettina's knowledge, and Youth and Poverty had won.

The spoils were claimed abruptly; Marian went forth one Saturday in June and did not return. In her stead came a letter which reached the

house by the afternoon delivery, and which was shown to Ide by a grim, thin-lipped woman in whom he scarcely recognized his wife. He read it hastily, his glance touching only the essential words.

"DEAREST MOTHER: By the time this comes to you . . . Tom and I . . . married. I know you . . . greatly grieved, but . . . never have consented . . . at home, so we thought . . . the better way. Will write . . . New York. Try . . . forgive . . .  
"Lovingly,  
"MARIAN."

He finished this fragmentary perusal in time to see Bettina, her forced composure suddenly giving way, fling herself into her mother's arms.

"Oh, mama," she sobbed. "To think of Marian, with all her beauty and talents, being reduced to the position of a common drudge!"

Across her daughter's shaking shoul-

der Mrs. Wynkoop fixed upon Ide a gaze implacably hostile, vindictively triumphant; for, when all was said and done, the truer victory was hers. But unfortunately, the gaze failed to achieve its due effect. Ide was looking forward, with his mind's eye, to a day twenty years later, when Marian, herself the mother of an ungrateful daughter, should return to weep forth her sorrow on Bettina's breast; and to a yet more distant day, celebrated by the tribute which that daughter must render, in like manner, to Marian. Still further along, he saw the women of his race in an endless chain, each deserting her mother, and each feeling in her turn the pangs of the deserted . . . The idea gave him so much artistic pleasure that he was almost oblivious of Mrs. Wynkoop's gloating.

He had cultivated his imaginative side.



## WHEN SUMMER DIED

By Edward Wilbur Mason

WHEN Summer died we never marked the day,  
For all the world was beautiful and gay;  
And though the awestruck heavens held their breath,  
How could we know such lovely calm meant death?

The brook still ran with laughter through the wood,  
A crystal Undine in the solitude;  
And like a feathered echo in the hush,  
The mocking-bird still answered lark and thrush.

No cloud or shadow dimmed the sky's blue sheet;  
Only a butterfly amid the wheat,  
With failing breath its languid sails all furled,  
And anchored in the poppies dew-impierled.

How could we know our loss when in its place  
Was left such treasure of resplendent grace;  
How could we miss the Summer, when at noon  
The burning bush outflamed like very June!



## THE ZOO

By Austin Adams

"AND of course 'Plausy' Whiteman is here," went on Miss Spencer, delighting to rub it into the major.

"Of course," murmured the major, beating a meditative little tattoo on his bald spot; "Mr. Plausant Whiteman goes with the property, like a built-in sideboard, or the family skeleton in the closet. Go ahead!"

"The Lorillard Burdens," continued Miss Spencer, careful to mention first such of the huge house-party as would stir up the patient old philosopher.

"For our sins. Who else?"

"Gwendolen Carew—came with the Lisenard Aikmans, you know, and Her Grace of Inchester."

"And how many trunks?"

"You *are* observant!" laughed Miss Spencer; and the major bowed. "At least a dozen trunks, Mathilde tells me; but then, you know, my dear major, Gwen's gowns are not mere vanity. She attended those lectures of that absurd little Monsieur St. Cyr, last Lent, at the Gotham, and Gwen has worked out an exactly scientific theory on what the little milliner called the '*psychologie de la toilette*.'"

"Has she?" mused the major. "And—?"

"And the Gordons and the Archie Westervelts—you know, the Palm Beach set. Twenty of them! Honk! Honk!"

"Thank heaven they don't signify! They'll live out in the garage—during the few remaining days before they go the way of all degenerate despisers of the horse. Proceed. Beall tells me that there are sixty beds all told and that his 'angel'—poor devil! how I

feel for him!—that Mrs. B. threatens to have them all occupied—when Beall had planned to have only a detail of the Old Guard down for the holidays!"

"Full up!" continued Miss Spencer, eying the major with almost compassion before delivering her next shot, and waiting for him to set down his teacup before she spoke. "And of course Mrs. Craigie with Delano in tow, damme!"

The major started. But at least the Craigies had the merit—a rare one in what passes for society in these days of sudden arrivals—the merit of having bored two generations of old New Yorkers. So the major nodded to his pretty little gossip, and lifted the old rose velvet cozy from the teapot, intent on a fresh brew. "And quite a contingent of foreign *attachés*, with that explosive Count Poppollski, of the Russian embassy, at their head."

The major winced.

"And—as the Goddards and Jack Broome and Stuyvie Munn are here—'Girly' Bleecker!"

The major dropped the teapot.

"And a score of the veally younger set," piled on Miss Spencer, rising to go. "And last of all, Miss Cruger with her conscience and her rheumatism!"

"Don't!" groaned the major, drawing aside the portière for her to pass. "Beall owes me an apology."

"For letting his angel entertain parrots and monkeys unawares?"

"No; for letting her decoy us all down from town on the understanding that we were to stop a fortnight. This can't possibly last forty-eight hours!"

"But fancy the opportunities, while it does last, for a philosophical ob-

server to make philosophical observations!" replied Miss Spencer, with that quaint little cocking of the head, which the major never sees without telling the very few elders of his kidney that no girl with such a temptation about her could have escaped marriage for twenty-five years in *their* day.

"Get thee to thy aunt, thou cynic," scowled the major, "and bid that wisest of women to come to my rescue if I fly a signal of distress. Breakers ahead—or I'm not fifty next Tuesday and a veteran."

To the temptation of the piquant cocking of her pretty head she now added the yet more tempting pursing up of her pretty lips, and the major—fifty next Tuesday—did it. Then she ran away to delve with her aunt and Mathilde for the gowns to be worn at dinner, sure to be at the bottom of the last trunk; and the major started out to explore the geography of the house.

Somewhere in the intricacies of the isthmus connecting the great pile with what looked from the grounds like a sort of annex or independent house he met his host. Mr. Beall was pacing up and down a marble corridor—always stopping and turning exactly half-way down the long passage—and looking as depressed as if he had just bidden farewell forever to his last friend instead of having learned through his valet of the arrival of threescore guests.

"Why, hello, Hartopp," he exclaimed, brightening as he caught sight of the major at the other end of the corridor; "it's deucedly decent of you, old man, to come down to this infernal hole to stand by me, you know, during this beastly circus. Blame Angela for it!"

"I was just having a look around your stunning château," answered the major, an adept at oblique narration, "and my first feeling was one of regret—that Theodore the First is not *de jure* as well as *de facto* our absolute sovereign so that you could entertain royalty, you know."

"Chuck it!" snorted Beall, "and please cross the frontier and come into

the smoking-room. Old Craigie and a foreign ass with a pompadour and a nasty temper are braying at each other—over the situation in the Far East, or something that neither knows anything about—and I want you to come and prevent bloodshed."

"Frontier?" muttered the major, postponing the taking up of the Eastern question in the smoking-room.

"Yes," replied Beall grimly; "the only instructions I gave the architect—the biggest thief out of Sing Sing, by the way!—was that there must be practically two houses, one for Angela and one for me. The frontier runs right through the statue of Psyche here. As a bachelor and an all-nighter, Hartopp, you'll find it prudent to take up quarters in my half of the house, for I deeded the blooming place to Angela on the condition that no petticoats must cross the frontier, and that the greater house might rule by day, but the lesser to rule as it pleased by night. Come on!"

Chuckling inwardly and pondering sundry things, the major followed his host through a series of sumptuously forbidding rooms to a small, rather untidy, thoroughly comfortable den, into which poor Beall had smuggled, he boasted, some of his old, usable, well-worn furniture.

When Mr. Beall entered the arena with the major for a buffer, Count Poppollski was gesticulating madly and running his twitching fingers through his bristling pompadour, as if hoping thereby to restrain them from choking old Craigie, who was sputtering contemptuous denials to all the distinguished diplomat's lucid views on Japan.

"But ze remarks of monsieur are one insult *insufferable* to my *gouvernement*, yes!" protested the count, clutching the lapel of the major's coat and pointing defiantly at Mr. Craigie, when Major Hartopp murmured, "Gentlemen, gentlemen!"

"I leave it to any man in the room!" sizzled old Craigie, strutting, very purple and peppery, back and forth on the hearth-rug. "I leave it to any man of sense in America if Japan couldn't

whip any three European powers put together, and without half trying! Of course she could! Any fool knows that, damme!"

"*Voilà! messieurs!*" fumed the count. "You have haired ze insults of zis—zis—puff!"

He broke away from the major and made in the direction of the defamer of Holy Russia, nothing short of a fixed intention to tweak that gentleman's little red nose gleaming in his flashing eye; but the major intervened with the proffer of the friendly offices of a neutral.

"Does one notice the gabbling of geese, monsieur," said he to the count, in French, "or resent the bark of a spoiled poodle in the lap of old age? Leave the dear old volcano of gaseous inconsequences to me."

Count Poppolski ceased firing and watched the negotiations looking to an armistice, with anything but calmness, mopping his brow vigorously the while.

"Mrs. Craigie is wondering what has become of you, Craigie—in a rather ominous frame of mind, too, I fear," said the major, stating a constant condition of Mrs. Craigie's mind, and not a specific instance; and old Craigie surrendered.

"Where? Where is she, Hartopp?" he asked nervously, the guilty look of a truant in his little screwed-up eyes.

"Searching for you all over the place," answered the major, once more falling back, in perfectly good conscience, upon a perpetual verity.

Old Craigie, looking anxiously at his watch, trotted off to answer for his half-hour's freedom; and the other men looked at one another and smiled. While the major was still engaged in smoothing the ruffled plumage of the count, a footman came in with a penciled note from Mrs. Beall, summoning the major to an immediate audience in her boudoir. Madame was still in the hands of the hairdresser when the major reached the exquisite Marie Antoinette, pea-green-and-gold apartment, and no less than four tirewomen were also in attendance at the mysteries of the toilette. Presently,

however, these functionaries were dismissed, and Mrs. Beall, in a bewilderingly gorgeous embroidered kimono, raised the fingers of her left hand for the major—such a dear old gallant of the old school, the major!—to press to his lips. And they seated themselves very confidentially in the cozy curls of a *vis-à-vis* sofa. Cigarettes were lit, and father confessor and penitent at their ease and chummy.

"Of course, dear major, I'm counting on you, you know," began Mrs. Beall, quite as modestly as if she had ever counted on anybody to the extent of letting anyone or anything keep her from having her own way.

Major Hartopp lifted his eyebrows; not at all in surprise or displeasure, but that manœuvre being the old campaigner's non-committal move indicating that he passed the deal.

"Yes," went on his hostess ingratiatingly, "how ever could I manage *this* without you?"

"Managing sixty is a bit trying, isn't it?"

"Only fifty-two—thank heaven!"

"So?" asked the major, perceptibly cheered.

"Yes; the Peabody-Beekmans wired regrets, and——"

"A relief to the Lorillard Burdens, don't you think?" broke in the major; "since it might have been embarrassing for the quartette to pass a fortnight under the same roof so soon after our accommodating divorce courts had effected an exchange of wives between Beekman and Burden. But I interrupted you."

"Ah, but that's where the joke comes in!" laughed Mrs. Beall. "The Burdens won't be here."

"I understood—" began the major, growing actually cheerful.

"They arrived this afternoon, but each of them left within an hour—for cause."

Major Hartopp's eyebrows pleaded for light.

"Yes. It's too funny for anything. You see, when *she* heard that the duchess was here—as if a third-degree divorcée was a menace to little Lorry's

morals!—she left; and when *he* heard that Jack Broome was here—as if Jack hadn't even his capacious hands full with Gwen Carew!—he left. Isn't it delicious? And the funniest part of it is that neither of them knew that the up train is reported six hours late; so they will have a delightful evening with Miss Cruger in the little eight-by-ten station!"

"With Miss Cruger?" asked the major, too near fifty himself to betray too keenly his joy over the departure of the venerable maid.

"Yes. She was awfully sweet about it, and said she'd come down for a quiet week in Lent; but that she really couldn't countenance Mrs. Burden's 'vaudevillian past,' as she styled it."

"Vaudevillian is good," mused the major. "That accounts for only five; you said there were eight deserters."

"Mrs. Van Cordtlandt was huffy because I addressed my note to her as 'Mrs. Gustavus Van Cordtlandt,' and thereby seemed to side with young Mrs. Petrus Van Cordtlandt in the contest for the right to be *the* 'Mrs. Van Cordtlandt of New York and Newport.' And the Monty Pells wouldn't come because I was having the Lisenard Aikmans, and Mrs. Pell says that Mrs. Aikman won the semi-finals in the tennis tournament last Summer by trickery."

"And yet the readers of the Society Column envy us!" meditated the major.

"That leaves just fifty-two. What do you think—be honest now!—of my happy family and the outlook for the largest house-party ever attempted in America?" asked Mrs. Beall, confident of praise.

"I admire courage," replied the major. "The one feature of Barnum's old Broadway circus that burns in my memory was the thrilling act of Made-moiselle Céleste, the world-renowned and only living wild beast charmer."

"Courage?" asked Mrs. Beall, to whom humor was a sealed book.

"Yes—Gwen, the duchess, Poppollski, Craigie, the garage fiends, 'Girlie'

Bleecker, the foreigners, the calves, the gouty Old Guard, the buds and gone-to-seeds—superb courage, I call it! And especially Her Grace of Inchester—heroic courage, my dear Mrs. Beall, sublime!"

"Of course poor Gladys has gone through it three dreadful soul-harrowing salacious times, but two out of the three times *she* got the decree, remember; and everybody says that that Polish violinist, with whom she eloped, was simply irresistible!"

"It's not her past," replied the major. "Pasts are a recognized feature of latter-day society; it's my lady's unmistakable willingness to go through it three more dreadful soul-harrowing salacious times that I had in mind. But that's neither here nor there. What's the programme for the house-warming?"

"Oh, *don't* call it that, I beg of you!" cried Mrs. Beall, holding her heavily burdened hands to her tiny pink ears. "House-warming, indeed! Do give me credit for some originality! It's not a house-warming; it's a christening party!"

"No! So there's a little angel? I hadn't heard. Strange Beall didn't mention the arrival of an heir. Boy or girl?" The major beamed.

"Goodness! No! How old-fashioned you are! I've hit upon a brand-new idea. Instead of naming this place—and isn't it magnificent, really?—instead of naming it myself, I'm going to let you all christen it—such an exciting contest, too, as we are sure to have when the voting begins. The campaign will last clear through until the Twelfth Night ball, and you can imagine how the cliques will clique and the wheels within wheels will whirr, especially if either of the rivals-to-the-death happen to head the opposing parties!"

"Charming! Divulge!" said the major, his martial blood tingling with anticipations of the fray; but before Mrs. Beall could unfold the details a silvery chime pealed from the high belfry.

"Gracious! There's the dressing-

bell! I didn't dream it was half-after seven. Run away, dear major, and you'll know at dinner—quarter-past eight; we assemble in the Court of the Muses for the *grande marche*. I'll let you take Miss Spencer out. Fly!"

On the way to his room and while he was dressing Major Hartopp tried to follow the evolution of Angie Brevoort, old Lott Brevoort the Brooklyn Heights tea-importer's girl, into the all-conquering Mrs. Beverly Beall, still sighing for more worlds to conquer. Old Brevoort had piled up the then considered vast fortune of half a million, upon whose income—it was invested in safe four per cent. Government bonds—Angie was able to migrate to a decidedly decent apartment just off Fifth avenue, in the Murray Hill region, where, as the stunning Miss Angela Brevoort, she soon penetrated, thanks to her blood and thoroughbred air, the very arcana of the old New Yorkers. Her career was brilliant, not to say breath-taking. By modestly confining herself to three life-wishes, she succeeded in realizing all her ambitions before her rivals, older and seemingly better equipped than she, had done more than formulate their plans for the coming season. All that Angela Brevoort set out to do in life was, first, to marry the richest eligible man in New York; second, to become the mistress of the finest country house in America; and third, to achieve the reputation for giving the smartest house-parties in the world.

Beverly Beall, forty, well-groomed, crotchety, a bachelor, living at the Knickerbocker Club on his just sufficient little patrimony of twenty thousand a year, and known to even his closest associates—he had no friends—as "Sphinxxy" Beall, inherited Miss Lavinia Auchmuty's thirty-to-fifty millions, nobody knew which, just in time to qualify as fulfiller of Angela Brevoort's first wish. They were married by the bishop at St. Thomas's, spent a year or two abroad, and then Mrs. Beverly Beall returned to "the States" for the easy accomplishment of her two remaining wishes.

Great was the merriment at dinner when the butler, as grave and impressive as an archbishop, passed around a huge *repoussé* gold punch-bowl, from which each of the guests was requested to draw a little hand-painted ivory card. On these they then wrote, with much contracting of brows and far-off gazing for ideas, the name they would give "the finest country house in America," if it were theirs. Once more the archbishop with his acolyte footmen passed the bowl, and the half a hundred suggestions were duly deposited therein, neither the hostess nor the host having a vote. Amid breathless silence Mrs. Beall then drew the two cards which were to be the basis for the contest.

"Beallton Manor," read Mrs. Beall on the first card. "What a perfectly stunning name! Who thought of it?"

"Guilty!" said the Duchess of Inchester, and a general clapping of hands ensued, not unmixed, the major thought, with a slight curling of pretty lips and a bored expression on the part of possibly half of the women.

"Beverly Chase," read Mrs. Beall, taking up the second card. "Lovely! The very thing! Whose bright idea?"

"Mine!" confessed Gwendolen Carew, and again the clapping of hands; again, the major thought, the curling of pretty lips and the bored expression on the part of possibly half of the women—this time, however, on the part of the women who had smiled before; and the major scented the battle not afar. The men were unanimous both times and impartially cordial.

"You understand," explained Mrs. Beall, "that a vote on these two perfectly beautiful names will not be taken until tomorrow night at dinner. It can't make any difference, of course, which wins, since Her Grace and dear Gwen have both made such happy suggestions; but it will be no end of a lark, will it not, to canvass for votes and make stump speeches and do all the exciting things they do during a political campaign."

The arrival of ortolans à la *Marquise de Périgord* cut short the first



outburst of compaigning excitement, but immediately after dinner, even before the men came from their cognac and cigars, Gwen and the duchess were hard at it. The preliminary warfare was carried on in the open and with every (surface) indication of being a good-natured test of popularity; but from his own sagacious observations, no less than from reports made to him by Miss Spencer, the major guessed that undercurrents of acrimonious intrigue would soon be boiling. Bridge and billiards were forgotten during that first night of the memorable campaign; everybody could think and talk only of the respective merits of "Beallton Manor" and "Beverly Chase," or, to be more exact, of the relative attractions of a blond duchess and a brunette heiress to the Carew millions.

Old Craigie, mounted upon a malachite pedestal so that nearly everybody could see the little man, made a side-splitting speech in the interests of the duchess, which drove Mrs. Craigie over to Gwen's camp, horse, foot and dragoons. Count Poppolski, ablaze with decorations, and forgetful of *noblesse oblige*, took issue with Mr. Craigie and announced his intention to vote for the name proposed by Miss Carew, and not that suggested by his titled friend, the duchess. "Plausy" Whiteman tactfully asked if he might not "split the embarrassing difference" and prove his devotion to each of the fair contestants by voting that the name be neither "Beallton Manor" nor "Beverly Chase," but "Beallton Chase," or "Beverly Manor"; and every man in the room, seeing a way out of a hole, shouted, "Bravo! That's the ticket!"

"You see," pleaded "Plausy" plausibly, "it would be so easy to vote for either of these singularly happy names 'if t'other fair charmer weren't there!'"

"No, sir!" retorted Mrs. Beall, as one having authority, "a straight ticket, or none!" And every woman in the room, seeing each at least one man in a hole, shouted, "No splitting! A straight vote, or no vote!" And so it went all during the evening.

Just before the women, soon after

midnight, went up the great marble stairs, like a flock of birds-of-paradise going to roost, an unofficial ballot was taken, and the excitement became intense when it was discovered that the vote stood exactly tied, twenty-five for the duchess and twenty-five for Gwen. Women shot ominous glances of defiance at members of the opposite side; and the men went off into Mr. Beall's half of the house, to begin the betting on the ultimate result.

The next day was Christmas, but there was no evidence of peace and good-will about the little groups that chanced to meet for the go-as-you-please breakfasts in the morning-room. Most of the married men complained of sleepless and strenuous night-watches, during which they had resisted, with more or less success, the efforts of their wives to undermine their loyalty to "that horrid creature," by whom was meant either of the party leaders.

"It was something positively awful, damme!" said Mr. Craigie to the little coterie of gray heads he found at their devotions (examining the stained-glass) in the exquisite Gothic chapel; "awful! Why, she actually went the length of threatening to pack up and go by the first train, if I didn't swear to chuck the duchess—deucedly smart the duchess, and no end a fine figure, damme! But I gently reminded Mrs. C.," and Mr. C.'s little eyes winked with impish cunning, "that her departure, besides being a consummation devoutly to be wished, would break the deadlock—and my duchess would win in a canter, damme!"

The suppressed excitement upstairs was felt also in the servants' hall below. Mathilde reported that Miss Carew's maid had slapped the Duchess of Inchester's maid; whereupon Mr. Stuyvie Munn's man, enamoured of the Duchess of Inchester's maid, brought reprisals, in the shape of a black eye, on Mr. Jack Broome's man, enamoured of Miss Carew's maid. Even the garage felt the effects of the strained relations, the chauffeurs—there were eighteen of them, resident and visiting

—taking violent sides, as did also the grooms and footmen. In the upper world things grew hourly worse. All during the morning secret interviews were had by the two leaders with every man in the house, it being understood by both of the diving strategists that the women, whose prejudices were deeply rooted in ancient social feuds and personal spites, were hopeless; whereas the men were to be won over, as men have been since Adam, by women's wiles and the wisdom of the serpent.

"I actually believe she has engaged herself to at least four men and flirted scandalously with half the married ones since breakfast!" said Miss Spencer to the major as the duchess followed old Mr. Brayton Lenox into the romantic shimmer of the palm-house.

The formal test vote at dinner resulted in a tie. The deadlock showed no signs of dissolving, either, for Miss Carew's party whip, Goneril Gerry, reported an unbroken phalanx; while Imogen Morgan, who looked after Her Grace's supporters, was able literally to keep an eye on them, she having taken the precaution to pin a tiny sprig of mistletoe on the lapels of the faithful.

In the smoking-room odds were posted, without appreciable changes, at about ten to eight in favor of the duchess. No woman in either cohort exercised her privilege of changing her mind; most of them had conscientious scruples of a very marked sort against countenancing, even by so slight a sign, the "brazen effrontery and scandalous tactics" of—the other "creature!"

On the next night at dinner, and on the next and the next, for a week and more, no break was made in the deadlock, and it began to look as though the last and decisive vote, at the Twelfth Night ball, would find the sides still intact and obstinate, and the momentous question still undetermined. Meanwhile, however, occasional spasms of hope thrilled the breasts of one side or the other, when for a number of reasons, real or invented, people dis-

appeared mysteriously. But in every case it was found they had paired with somebody, or promised solemnly to return in time to vote at the ball. It leaked out, for instance, that Mrs. Rutherford Jay had really carried herself and the two girls off to town because Gwen Carew was so shamelessly making love to Dick Whitney and Reggie Forsythe, and not because she really feared that the house, being so newly finished, must be damp. But the resulting celebration among Gwen's followers was short-lived, for young Whitney and his sister and Reggie Forsythe promptly announced that they would not now vote. Other defections met with like counter moves, and the sixth of January, the fateful day, arrived, with both camps stubborn and unbroken.

It was on that morning that the major was sitting reading one of the English quarterlies, when young Vanderbilt Stickney, for whom, more than for any other of the "yearlings," the old 'cross-country thoroughbred cherished a fatherly regard at once deep and heartfelt, sought him in the sanctity and security of Major Hartopp's little room in one of the towers.

"Cæsar's ghost, Van, what is it now?" asked the major on seeing Stickney's look of final despair.

"It's all up!" replied Van. "She's turned me down—hard, definitely, for keeps!"

Now one of the major's most fond fancies was that Emily Spencer would not turn Van down; so he looked as grave as Van himself could have wished, and thought for a moment before replying.

"How are you going to vote tonight?" asked the major, not as irrelevantly as Van at first supposed, for he knew that Emily had become profoundly interested in the defeat of the duchess, on sincerely ethical grounds, too, since more had reached her ears than was commonly known through the house, Mathilde being both observant and communicative. "Come, Van, in strict confidence, you know; how are you going to vote?"

"For the duchess, of course," answered Stickney, open-eyed and with a touch of resentment at the major's cruel frivolity at such a moment. "You yourself have promised Her Grace your vote, haven't you?"

"Does Emily know?" went on the major, ignoring the impertinence of the youth on account of its very youthfulness.

"Does she *know*?" groaned Stickney. "Has she talked about anything else for a week? That damn fool, 'Girlie' Bleecker, told her that I had promised the duchess my vote, and Emily seems to take it deucedly ill, just why I can't for the life of me tell."

"How would it do to vote for Gwen?" suggested the major, carefully examining the inlaid work in the heavy Chinese paper-cutter.

"I've promised the duchess, and, anyhow, I——"

"All right! Play your duchess and lose your queen. What curious art these Chinese have!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Stickney after a dazed silence. "You're a wonder, major! I'll try it!"

He ran elated out of the room, leaving the major to smile knowingly for a little while before resuming his reading of the heavy article on "Germany's Commercial Aspirations in Africa and South America."

The dance of the tenantry at ten o'clock proved a dismal failure, since none of the Italians and Scandinavians and Irish, who were transforming some square miles of North Carolina wilderness into a park, could be cajoled or threatened—Mrs. Beall in despair had tried both means—to accept the invitation which they took for either a joke or an insult. A considerable number of negroes, however, did show up, but they merely stood for a few minutes gaping at the door of the blazing ball-room, upon whose slippery waxed floor they dared not venture. With grins and guffaws they soon escaped to their more congenial log cabins among the pines. Some English customs suffer a fatal sea change, it would seem.

But the ball proper was a tremendous success. Precisely at four in the morning the hostess, in gems that a Rajah would envy, announced that the final vote would be taken. The archbishop, attended by a long cortège of acolytes in crimson plush knee-breeches, brought the gold punch-bowl in state; and Mrs. Beall herself held it, standing upon a dais, while the forty-six surviving guests cast their ballots into it. You could have heard a mind change, if any had done so, when the little slips of paper were being counted. The company stood in a great semicircle about the dais.

"Twenty-three for Miss Carew!" announced Mrs. Beall, "and only one more vote to be counted."

The duchess had twenty-two to her credit; so that on the one remaining vote hung—everything. The tension was terrific; and Mrs. Beall's hand trembled as she—with dramatic delay—reached down to get the fatal ballot. Everybody, except the major and young Stickney, felt certain that it would be the same old story; the last vote would, of course, be for the duchess; and the result "no election." The major glanced knowingly at Stickney; Stickney glanced even more knowingly than the major. A thousand times the lover had rehearsed the little scene—to be enacted, preferably, in the palm-house—when he would reveal to Emily the mystery of how the tie had at last been broken by his love for her. As if with a woman's intuition, Emily herself seemed to anticipate some such rapturous dénouement, for she was flushed and breathing hard when Stickney looked across the glittering horseshoe at her.

"Twenty-three for Her Grace the Duchess of Inchester!" announced Mrs. Beall; and amid curses not loud but deep, and muttered "I told you so's," the company faced the disheartening fact that it was a tie and hopeless.

Under cover of the ensuing commotion the major made his way to Stickney's side. One glance at Van's woe-begone face was enough; that tried young fighter had not flinched, and the

fiasco was due to some other's sudden change of front.

"You can yet tell her of your sacrifice," whispered the major.

"Yes, of course I can; but confound it all, major, it's like offering her the empty case to prove that I bought a necklace!"

"Trust me to mend matters!" And the major vanished.

In mid-ballroom he sighted Miss Spencer's aunt bearing down under full sail on Emily, who stood, a statue of wonder, at a little distance from the buzzing and grumbling groups. In obedience to the major's signal of distress the wisest of women veered from her course, and followed him out into an anteroom.

"But good heavens! Major Hartopp, that's precisely what I induced Emily to do. At my suggestion, the poor child finally decided to vote for the unspeakable duchess—for Van's sake, you know!"

The major staggered; but in another minute Emily's aunt was turning wonder into rapturous mirth by whatever it was that she whispered to her niece; and Major Hartopp, after whispering whatever it was that he whispered to Mrs. Beall, mounted the dais and called loudly for attention.

"I wish merely to say that another ballot will now be taken, there being excellent reason for hoping that someone has changed his or her mind. In order to show good faith and that it is not I who have altered my intention, I make public my vote for Her Grace, and ask that it be counted as the first one for 'Beallton Manor': May it long shelter its present master and mistress!"

Pandemonium broke loose. The dogs of war, heretofore held in the leash of simulated friendships, were forthwith unleashed. Open charges of treason were heard on all sides. Superbly gowned dowagers and coy debutantes stabbed right and left with merciless cynicisms. Wives were seen to tow exasperated husbands out

of the storm-centre, there to try to extort confession and to administer condign punishments. Avowed supporters of their own candidate eyed each other suspiciously as they passed. Mrs. Craigie circled around the room like a hawk, preparatory to descending on Mr. Craigie, who dodged in and out among the belligerents, in open flight. The votes were cast amid the most unparliamentary uproar. Tellers were appointed to prevent cheating!

"It will be another tie, see if it isn't!" shouted Whip Goneril, to offset the cocksureness of Whip Imogen.

"And what on earth am I to name the place then?" asked Mrs. Beall, with the gold punch-bowl in her hands, into which the votes fluttered complacently or were shot in the shape of vindictive little pellets. "I haven't thought of a single name myself, and it'll be a bad omen to postpone the christening; it always is."

"Why not call it 'The Zoo'!" asked the major, his philosophical eye sweeping the field of battle.

Mr. Beall shouted for joy, and a ripple of hilarious approval ran around the room, although Mrs. Beall, knowing only too well that the major's witticisms had that ear-mark of genius—eternal life, shook her finger at him and ill disguised her resentment beneath a show of playfulness.

"Miss Gwendolen Carew wins by twenty-four to twenty-two!"

As soon as the portentous announcement was made twenty-two ladies and gentlemen, headed by the duchess, crowded about Miss Carew and lied to her with the utmost sweetness and cordiality. And presently the orchestra began the old Virginia reel, in which all joined—all but Stickney and Emily Spencer, who had stolen out into the delicious dimness of the palm-house.

The faint first streaks of gray showed over the hills before the last lights went out in the mullioned windows and sleep settled like a mantle of peace over "Beverly Chase."

## THE WIND GOD'S WOOING

By John G. Neihardt

NOTE: Plutarch mentions a lost poem, entitled "Pontius Glaucus," supposed to have been written by Cicero when a youth. This poem is said to have been based upon the well-known Roman legend of Glaucus, the fisherman, who was drowned, his soul expanding into an elemental deity. The following poem, while based upon the same legend, is not given as an attempt at the restoration of the lost poem.

G LAUCUS, the fisher, sat his tossing craft;  
The sun was dying on the Roman Lake,  
And save where Day departing grimly laughed,  
The skies were dim, as mourning for his sake.  
Safe was it for the saucy fish to take  
Its bite unnoticed, nor did Glaucus see  
The boiling clouds that dogged the fierce winds' wake:  
Far other stormier, gloomier thoughts had he  
Than how his craft went mad upon the dizzy sea!

"Howl, O mad Winds, you can no stronger blow  
Than blows despairing passion in my brain!  
What care I where my futile soul may go,  
Since our two souls must evermore be twain?  
I am the poor, rough toiler of the main,  
A god's desires in a slave's bent form!  
Full many a valiant hero in her vein  
Rebreathes; and unborn kings in her are warm!"  
He spoke, the while he breathed the frenzy of the storm.

"Some hand uncalloused shall unbind her zone,  
Some soft, unweathered cheek shall she caress.  
She is a god's soft song, and I a moan:  
Her veins run day, and mine the dumb distress  
Of dusk; yet I have felt her bosom press  
Throughout the night against my peasant breast,  
And disenchanting dawn hath left me less,  
Less than a memory of what mocked my rest!"  
—Now Night had frowned the last sad glory from the West.

The sea crouched snarling like an ambushed beast,  
And hissing, crashing sprang upon the bark!  
Still from the mad abysm of the East  
Strode out the howling cohorts of the Dark!  
Nor lulled the cloud-winged Winds that they might hark  
How fared the struggling fisher in the sea.  
Meanwhile, in drowning, Glaucus grew a spark  
Of that swift Flame that thrills Infinity,  
And through him leaped a voice, "Thou art a deity!"



The pang of passing pinched his chilling frame;  
 The grin of death sat sullen on his face.  
 Then o'er his soul a thrill exultant came!  
 Within the crystal glories of the place  
 He saw his form reflected, full of grace  
 As though the sinuous beauty of the storm  
 Had breathed itself in one of mortal race!  
 Then, as the god welled in him fierce and warm,  
 Cleaving the shaken deeps, he mounted in the storm!

To him the thunder was a pigmy's shout.  
 Above the voice of Wind and Wave he cried:  
 "Blow till the Earth writhes painfully about  
 Again with Titan-pangs! I ride! I ride!  
 God of the Wind and Master of the Tide!  
 Burst from Æolus' careful hand and shake  
 The ancient dusk and silence that abide  
 About the world's end, O ye Winds! Awake!  
 Breathe terror through the skies for poor, mad Glaucus' sake!"

As some brain tainted with a morbid thought,  
 The sentient Cosmos trembled with the rush  
 Of storm, like some mad passion that is wrought  
 Out of a fevered mind! The morning blush  
 Now marked where Eos stepped; a tender hush  
 Soothed Glaucus' maddened pulses, and he felt  
 The soft Olympian joys that ever gush  
 From hearts empyreal. Now began to melt  
 The erstwhile frenzied clouds where Morning's footfall dwelt.

Upon a couch of golden mist reclined  
 The new-born Wind God Glaucus. Near him crooned  
 Some unseen Zephyr, like a soul that pined;  
 Its theme was love, its notes were sleepy-tuned.  
 Then grew on him the soft nights, argent-mooned,  
 When as a mortal he had crept anigh  
 Where she, his Princess, walked, the while he swooned  
 With the voluptuous pleasure of his eye.  
 —The unseen Zephyr sang; the Wind God heaved a sigh.

The lazy Day strolled up the golden steep:  
 A tender vision thrilled the drowsed god's brain.  
 There came an amorous woman in his sleep,  
 Wide-armed and panting as with gentle pain:  
 He knew the face, the form and the sweet strain  
 That was her voice: "O Glaucus, I am thine!  
 Teach me to die; to leave the flesh and vein  
 That are a prison! O that thou wert mine!"  
 —The God awoke: the Day still climbed the long incline.

The amorous voice still echoed in his heart:  
 Beneath his cloud he bade the swift Winds blow.  
 Scarce did the golden fleece-couch seem to start,  
 When spread a palace garden far below:  
 The languorous palms, the plashing founts, and O!

## THE SMART SET

There slept the being of his sweetest thought!  
 Then summoned he the various Winds that blow  
 Sweet-burdened with the subtle incense caught  
 From Summer isles where suns their softest wiles have wrought:

And in the sleeper's blood he bade them creep  
 To brew warm passion in her pulse, and sing,  
 Weaving their music dreamlike through her sleep,  
 The love-begetting amour of their King.  
 Then close he crept unto her, whispering  
 Words of immortal meaning: "Come with me  
 And I shall make thee deathless! From the spring  
 That laves Olympus thou shalt drink and be  
 Bride of the boundless Air and Mistress of the Sea!

"All night our souls shall twine, while Dian's star  
 Pours out Elysium on our fleecy sleep.  
 And we shall sight the sunrise from afar,  
 And we shall thrill to see Apollo leap  
 Out of the Deep to plunge into the Deep!  
 The Demons of the Storm shall stoop to thee  
 And thou shalt back them queen-like and shalt sweep  
 Into the unlocked depths of mystery,  
 Bride of the boundless Air and Mistress of the Sea!"

What said the sleeper's soul? Ah, who can know?  
 What fond unspoken vows were plighted then?  
 Did not the wind that day more gently blow,  
 And was the air not scented sweet, as when  
 Dates burst to make the desert fair again?  
 Ah, not for me to urge a modern shell  
 To sing into the ears of hurried men  
 What magic thing the lady's soul befell:  
 For cold her form was found. That tale the peasants tell.



## IF THEY ONLY WOULD!

"NOW, why in thunder," suddenly snarled the Old Codger, in the midst  
 of a recent session of the Soc Et Tu Um Club, "don't bores flock  
 together and bore each other?"

And although no answer was vouchsafed, the bare possibility that the train  
 of thought set in motion by the question might sometime bear fruit made it  
 the most valuable utterance of the evening.



## THE DIFFICULTY

"SHE says she will never marry a man who is not safe and sane."  
 "But how will she get him to propose?"

## HIS CLIENT, THE PEOPLE

By E. J. Rath

"AND therefore, gentlemen, I say truly, I also represent the people. I represent them not in the narrower sense that I hold their certificate of public office, but in a far broader one, in the sense that I come here to speak for that great heart and great conscience of which each one of us is a part. And I say to you that the people are seeking not vengeance, but justice; that they are crying not for the life of a victim, but for the proclamation of truth. Rather a thousandfold that this crime shall pass unpunished than, in the death of an innocent man, should be given birth an infamy that should endure as long as this State itself. He is my client, yes; but he is more than that. He is the people's client; the humble charge of the thousands and tens of thousands who await with anxious hearts, yet a serenity born of hope, the verdict which you gentlemen shall render today."

The voice had fallen to a low key, yet it was knife-like as it slashed the silence, even to the farthest corner of the court-room. For three hours the voice had pleaded, argued, threatened, but it was still clear and mobile. It had risen in storm; it had fallen in soft and even calm. Now it had hurried like the whirlwind; now its pace was slow and measured, with an infinite solemnity and dignity. It was a wonderful voice—gentle, harsh, musical, ponderous, a voice of a hundred moods; yet in every mood it did the bidding of its master.

Half a century of years had touched him lightly. He had the slim erectness of youth, the alert poise and movement of an athlete. The face, some said,

was Roman; others that it was a chiseled Greek type. Again, it was Napoleonic. It had all the mobility of the voice, and of it, too, he was the master. Middle age had come to him, and with it learning, wisdom and deep-welling human sympathy; yet the ardent spirit of the younger days was unfettered. Fame and wealth he had gained, but his heart was still big with the love of justice and truth, for he was of the people.

Now the fortnight of battle was near an end and hand to hand the last bitter struggle was being fought. The armies of witnesses had gone from the field and the gladiators were alone. There seemed little equality in the contest. A terrier was facing a lion. Sharp, terse, snappy, the prosecutor had pressed a case that was sinister in its cold certainty. But now, bereft of his witnesses and facing the lion alone, he found himself robbed even of the brief he held for the people.

For John Randall had waved a magic wand and the people followed him entranced. That he had been called into the Harwood case was a fact that in itself stirred the State. No trial for the life of a human being had hitherto found him in the lists. In the common use of the term, Randall was not a criminal lawyer. He stood at the head of the Bar of his State, but he had won his way as the pleader of cases that stood sharply apart from the issues of evil and violence that crowded the dockets of the criminal courts. A man of ideals and a powerful ally of good works was John Randall, but his career had borne him thus far along another path.

Substitute another for its victim, and the Harwood case became a mere sordid murder. The prisoner was humble and obscure, like thousands of his fellows. But Henry Harwood had been the owner of millions, and he had carved his way to them in a fashion, now deliberate and now spectacular, that made him a figure to be looked upon with respect, awe and even admiration, but never with sympathy. He was powerful, brilliant, successful—and unliked.

They found the body of Harwood sitting upright in a library-chair in his own home, with a knife thrust through the heart. No man save his murderer had seen Harwood die, yet with a pitiful directness the police arrested O'Neil. The circumstances were relentless. O'Neil, a clerk discharged from the Harwood banking house, was the man with motive, in a day when riches themselves, save in the possession of the self-declared friends of the people, were a sufficient cause for hatred. O'Neil had been heard to make threats. For days he had been drinking; he was ugly and desperate. Twice he had accosted Harwood in the street, and once since his discharge he had been ejected from the banker's office. He had been known to carry the very knife that had been found in Harwood's heart. Two men swore they had seen him hovering in the neighborhood of the Harwood mansion on the night of the crime. He could establish no clear alibi. Surely there seemed to be an end to the case when O'Neil was taken to a cell in the city jail, save the formality of having a jury pass upon the facts, which were few, sordid and commonplace enough.

But with the passing of the first sensation of interest and horror came the discovery of several things that concerned O'Neil; things that, through the nursing of an eager press, also came to concern the public. O'Neil was poor, and it was inevitable that his poverty should stand in sharp and bitter contrast to the millions left by the dead man. He had worked for a scanty salary. He had a wife and two babies, in a little flat far uptown. The struggle

had not been an easy one. True, there were times when O'Neil forgot the wife and the babies, but those were times when he made friends who said he was a good fellow, easy with his money—what he had of it—and convivial in his ways. The story of O'Neil's humble life was written to stir emotion. He was the victim of a system; one of the ill-favored whose lot was to be ground under the wheels. He was the representative of a great class of the oppressed.

Anyway, what was there to show that O'Neil had done the killing? Nobody saw him. The evidence was purely circumstantial, and could a man be put to death on that? The police and the public prosecutor needed a victim. They had taken the nearest to their hands.

The heart of the people was big and it took O'Neil in. The pennies and the dollars flowed into an ever-growing pile. And then the people and the press went to John Randall. They would have no other. For he was a man of the people himself, warm-blooded, generous, and a foe to oppression. And Randall swept up the pile of contributions, dropped it into the lap of the needy wife, with her two little babies, and took the case of Philip O'Neil because it was the people's case. And the people said, "There's Randall for you, all over."

It had been made their case and Randall kept it so. "The People" were not the cold, victim-seeking, yet intangible force that backed an indictment. They were those whose money, whose sympathy and whose warmly stirred emotion flowed together in a great and ever-deepening stream. And this became so evident as the day of trial drew near that the Harwood case gained a fame even beyond the deserts of its victim. For the people were moving.

The prosecutor did not try to stem an irresistible current. He gave himself simply to the selection of a jury of men whose minds seemed to him to be still unaffected by the flow of sentiment, and then to the plain telling of hard facts. But Randall was superb. He

brought the element of human sympathy into the court-room. He seemed to glorify the uncouth, forlorn figure who sat in the prisoner's chair. A sixth sense seemed to whisper to him that this man was innocent, and he brushed aside the looming evidence as though it were the work of conspirators. A hopeless case began to wear the image of victory. The hand of freedom and the hand of John Randall seemed to stretch forth toward the dull-eyed victim of a system.

Even the jury, it was discovered by the press, had fallen under the spell of the voice that swayed men. It was tradition that a jury should sit stern and unmoved, but tradition was swept out of the jury box when Randall spoke and twelve men leaned forward in their chairs, so that a single word that fell from the lips of the master might not be lost. They retired solemnly, under the gaze of hundreds of eyes and in a silence broken only by the shuffling of their own feet, and the little world in the court-room and the greater one without awaited their coming tribute to the genius of John Randall.

"Guilty of murder in the first degree," the foreman reported.

A muttering throng struggled its way out of the court-house. John Randall said through the press:

"The fight has begun in earnest."

## II

THERE followed a day when the senses of the people were dulled by the unforeseen; then a day of amazement that twelve men could be found indifferent to the truth, as Randall showed it. And then, with a quickened rush, came the reaction. Truly the fight was now on in earnest, for the leader had said so and his hands were to be upheld. The brilliant, self-sacrificing battle for the life of a fellow-man should not go for naught. Justice was not to be thwarted at the word of twelve men who could not see beyond a narrow horizon. Money was needed, and it

was forthcoming. Sympathy, too, was needed, and a hundred thousand tongues gave voice to it.

It was Randall who, months later, argued the appeal in the higher court. The stage setting was gone, but not the dramatic genius of the man who represented a cause. His argument was all that wisdom and skill in the law might make it, but it was more. It breathed the fervor, sincerity and enthusiasm which were a part of the man himself. The speech was wonderful to the people. It was none the less a marvel to the profession of which Randall stood at the head. It had the life-giving fire that kindled the public heart, even as it had not flamed during the days of the trial; yet it had the clear, sane logic of a mind that stood isolated by its very stature. For Randall the issue was a great one. A novice in the criminal law, yet he was accounted a master of all law, and he must not fail. Yet as he stood before a bench of black-gowned judges Randall did not forget that the people were behind him. It was the People *with* O'Neil, not the People *versus* O'Neil. The issue was even greater than that, for the whole system of justice was at stake. The laws which the people had made were passing a crucial test. Liberty was undergoing a new ordeal. All these things Randall showed, brilliantly, eloquently, clearly.

And once more the cause of the people was set aside by the very instrument which they had erected. The verdict was in accordance with the evidence, said the court, and it should stand.

The people looked to Randall to see if the work of a year had been swept away, and rejoiced to know that it was not. The case of Philip O'Neil had passed beyond the courts, but not beyond the reach of the long arm that moved as Randall guided it. There was a governor yet and he could save. But they would not ask him merely to save, said Randall. He must pardon. Justice could not fail through the fault of her system, so long as there was a last resort in the governor of the State.



The Harwood case went from the press to the pulpit, and from the pulpit to the platform. The great mass meeting in the city where O'Neil was tried sat awed for two hours under the spell of John Randall's voice. The roar of cheers that followed when he ceased to speak echoed through the State.

Then came the petition. It grew to a physical bulk that was marvelous. Its significance was almost ominous, in its hundreds of thousands of names. The governor was to be made to know that the cause of Randall was the cause of the people. Their champion went into the campaign with a zeal that grew as it fed upon itself. He had not sought the battle in the beginning, but it had come to him, and in his inherent love of the right he could not refuse the gage.

The hearing at the Capital brought a throng, gathered from far corners of the State. The great petition, borne in on the shoulders of men who staggered beneath its weight, lay in all its ponderous majesty on the table before the governor, and Randall, leaning forward and over it, seemed to conjure it into a living thing.

He did not ask for clemency, for the people had not come to demand the mere saving of a life. They came for the righting of a great wrong. Randall struck the blow for them, boldly and with confidence. This man should be pardoned, so the world might know that above all the mere forms and systems the people had created they still held the ultimate power. None preceded him and none followed him, for when Randall spoke the people spoke, and the last word was said.

Slow moving and cautious, the governor was a man who felt pulses. He was not combative; perhaps in the last analysis he was not brave. But he was conscientious. He wanted to do what the people wanted. Yet the governor conceived that the system of laws which they had created was their very bond of existence and progress, and he was known to be a man who held clear and sound views on the theory of the

organized state. He kept the image of the system before him, while the voice of the multitude came droning to him through a thousand channels. He did not forget the verdict of the twelve men and the calm decision of the bench of black-gowned judges, but he could not shut out from his ears the murmur of a million voices or the words of John Randall. The decision of the governor was long delayed. He took counsel of his advisers. He searched the calm judgment of his own mind. He knew what the people wanted and he knew what the logic of their system demanded. And, being a wise man, he compromised.

Philip O'Neil should not die for the killing of Henry Harwood. He was saved to a life imprisonment.

It was a blow for Randall and the people, but the leader met it with a serenity that was characteristic of his genius.

"We have won a little; a very little, perhaps," he said. "Yet we have won the assurance of ultimate victory. The issue cannot now be taken away. In the end we shall win. Justice will be done. We have merely moistened our lips at the cup, and we shall not rest until we drink the full measure."

### III

Two years passed and John Randall was the governor of his State. The people had called him to greater things, with a voice that was not uncertain. Not in the history of their commonwealth had a governor been given such a majority as fell to him.

Bitterly his opponents attacked him for the issue on which they said he ran. But his friends, the people, accepted that issue joyfully. They asked no better platform for their candidate. As for himself, Randall made it no part of his campaign. Somehow, he gave the impression that he deprecated it; his campaign was on a plane higher and apart from it. Yet he did not repudiate it. He knew the strength of the undercurrent, for he had sounded

it to its depths. He knew what had made him the candidate of the people; he knew why he was going to be elected—for he was a man of foresight, who discerned the trend of things with rare judgment. But he nevertheless shaped his course away from the thing that was in the public mind, for he conceived that he was soon to be given the burden of a duty that comprehended larger and graver problems. The people made their campaign in their own way and Randall made his after his own fashion. Yet neither was deceived.

Randall took up the affairs of his State with an alert sense of responsibility. He threw himself deep into the study of matters that concerned public welfare. He dived into problems that politicians had feared to touch. Duty led him to labors that were at once the amazement and despair of men who had made government their trade. And in the execution of the prodigious task that he set for himself he found happiness.

Yet his happiness was not free from alloy, for he was conscious of a thing impending and haunting. He had sought escape by loading his shoulders with the heavy affairs of statesmanship, but he knew in his heart that he could not escape from the other, the real, issue. And this troubled him, for Randall conceived that he stood in a new relation to his client, the people.

They waited a decent time, and then they came to him with their case. It was not to wage a new fight, but merely to receive at his hands the spoils of victory. Their voice was no longer pleasant to his ears. He did not think he was a coward, yet he knew that he instinctively flinched from it.

Randall temporized. He suggested that it were better to leave the case of O'Neil to another than he. He doubted the wisdom of transforming the pleader into the judge. This had not been his motive in coming into the highest office in the State. Yet his enemies could fairly point to it with scorn if it was forced upon him. Thus Randall met his client.

The people, wondering, drew back

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a little and waited. And then again they reminded him of his words, but two years ago, that justice would be done in the end and that their cause should triumph. Had not the time come at last? The victory had been gained, and at whose hands more fittingly than his could it be bestowed? He was still their pleader, and in a higher court. But John Randall demurred, and his great client could not understand. It seemed that they asked for a small thing; for the very thing which he had told them so eloquently and earnestly was right and true, and of the very essence of justice itself.

And then it became known to them that the governor was deeply troubled by this thing which ought to have overjoyed him. He had asked it as a privilege that the case of Philip O'Neil be not brought before him. They could not comprehend that. For it was his case, as well as theirs; in truth, his more than any other's. Surely, a false sense of delicacy at this time should not work a denial of justice to the innocent. Yet, here in the hour of his vindication, their champion was reluctant and faltering.

Despite what was almost his entreaty, they put it formally into his hands. The old petition was brought out and laid before him. The delegation came and reminded him of the people's issue. They told him that his client was awaiting the final accounting.

The governor listened like a man weary and sad. Yet as they spoke of his duty to the people something came into his face that betokened a man from whose heart a weight is lifted. When their spokesman ceased he arose with a composure that told of peace in his mind.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I shall not issue a pardon to Philip O'Neil, nor shall I order a commutation of his sentence."

He scanned the faces before him swiftly and read astonishment, disappointment, chagrin.

"You have said that I owe a duty to

the people," continued the governor. "You have reminded me that the people are still my client. I also conceive it thus. And it is because of that sense of duty to the people that I now decline to interfere in this case.

"The fate of this unfortunate man has been made to appear the particular heart's desire of the people of this State. In bringing about that result I seek to escape none of the responsibility. I led and the people followed me. And then the people led, and I followed them. They are still my client. My responsibility to them is higher than

ever before. I can only deal with things as the interests of this great collective client demand. To do otherwise would be to work betrayal and dishonor.

"And when I say that I cannot interfere in the case of Philip O'Neil I am doing by the people what I believe to be my highest duty. For O'Neil is guilty—guilty of a crime cold and cruel and mercilessly planned. He made his confession to me."

The governor's client went away silently, trying to fathom the heart of their leader.



## THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA

By Emery Pottle

MY soul becalmed, like to a ship in stays,  
 With idle sails, beneath a white-hot sun,  
 Lies helpless on the courses it would run,  
 Nay, hath forgot the impulses of its ways  
 And broods upon a glassy sea of days,  
 Changeless, inert, with sickening calms opprest  
 In semblances of rest which is not rest,  
 Nor sign of land to solve its aching gaze.

Thou who art life and very breath of Life,  
 Give to my soul embattled winds of strife!  
 Out of the tumult and the surge of night  
 I would my ship might fight unto the light,  
 And in gray watches of an unsailed sea,  
 All spent with triumph, then discover Thee.



## NOT WEALTHY ENOUGH

"HE is rather eccentric, isn't he?"

"Heavens, no! Just foolish. Why, he isn't worth more than ten thousand dollars."

## A HAUNTED GARDEN

By Louis Untermeyer

BETWEEN the moss and stone  
The lonely lilies rise;  
Tangled and overgrown  
My lady's garden lies.  
Weeds climb about the stoop  
And clutch the crumbling walls—  
The drowsy grasses droop,  
The night-wind falls.

The place is like a wood;  
No sigh is there to tell  
Where rose and iris stood  
That once she loved so well;  
Where amaryllis grew  
A leafless thornbush stands,  
And shrubs that never knew  
Her tender hands.

The moonbeams now commence  
To tear their gauzy shrouds;  
From tattered cerements  
They filter thro' the clouds  
Like ribbons frayed and thin;  
And, startled by the light  
The stillness shrinks within  
The depths of night.

Useless lie spades and rakes,  
Rusted the garden-tools.  
There where the moonlight makes  
Nebulous silver pools  
In which strange shapes are cast,  
Something unseen has stirred.  
Was it a breeze that passed?  
Was it a bird?

Dead roses lift their heads,  
And from a grassy tomb  
That once was pansy-beds  
There steals a vague perfume.  
The gate is opened wide,  
The garden that has been  
Now blossoms like a bride. . . .  
Who entered in?

## "JOY DEVINE"

By Marion Hill

WHEN the Pullman car *Mendoza*, on the rear of the South Bound Flyer, pulled into Dodge City it was three o'clock in the morning of July Fourth, though, to the weary "Brink of Life" Company who were on the platform of the depot waiting to take the car it was still practically July Third, for they as yet had had no sleep.

"And it is always the same-day, till the day-after lights up," expounded Joy to the boy, Muncie, who tagged at her skirts where he found—interest and anguish by turns—in preference to remaining with his deadly-lively mother, "Miss" Tyrrell.

"But it will be the Fourth when we wake, won't it?" persisted the child anxiously. He had been awaiting the day for a year.

"Say 'Fourth' again, Muncie Keith, and I'll jump down your throat," prohibited Joy.

"Fourth," murmured he under compulsion, ducking instantly but making a trustful reappearance at her other side. "And, say, Joy, are you *sure* I'll be able to buy fireworks in—what's the dinky town we play?"

"Sure, sure," she said wearily. "Do try to think of something else."

"You are tired, Miss Devine?" asked a man's low voice, quite close to her.

It did not surprise her. She had grown rather to expect that voice at almost any time, and to discern in it a protective and respectful quality which, somehow, always stirred her to a reluctant antagonism.

"Why, no," she said sarcastically.

"How absurd, when it is not four o'clock yet."

"Because," patiently continued Eric Hanson, "there will be no trouble about getting undisturbed sleep tomorrow, for our car is to be left upon a siding some time in the forenoon, at a junction point, to be picked up by a trunk line later."

"Our car," she impertinently commented. "How professional you are getting! Though, after all, why isn't it 'your' car, since you're backing the show? What is your business, anyhow, when you are not bailing us out?"

"I believe I might be called a railroad man," he offered methodically.

"Believe? Can't be quite sure of it, even yourself?"

"No," he replied evenly. "I am not occupied with anything, very much, just now. I had the fortune, or misfortune, of having property left me—a home, some land and some money." He spoke hesitatingly, yet with a certain stress as if wishful that his words might carry weight.

It appeared that they did not.

"Don't worry," soothed Joy. "You won't have anything, soon."

"Gibble-gabble, bibble-babble," cheerfully broke in Chapman Childs, the comedian. "That's Joy Devine, I bet a dollar, even in the dark."

"The only time you'd ever bet it—when you couldn't see it," said Joy severely. "And do you call this dark, with an idiotic premature Kansas sunrise waking up the middle of the night? What are we blowing about the platform for? Why don't we get aboard?"

"We're getting," assured Childs. "Lawson has us ticketed by now, and



we can go beddy-house by-by. 'Mother, mother, mother, pin a rose on me' and let me sleep."

Eric Hanson looked with grave interest at the jibbering comedian. These grown men and women who were old in wisdom of the buffeting world and who yet remained children at heart never ceased to be objects of stolid pleasure to him.

The appearance of Lawson incited Joy to a derisive emulation of the manager's flurry, and she began herding the troupe into the car.

"Get aboard, Muncie. This is a kid-melodrama we are handing out to the gentle public, and if we lose you, we lose the show. You next, Mr. Hanson; losing you, we lose liberty and trunks."

One after another she "guyed" them all in—Nina Tyrrell, the indolent but clever leading lady; Eula Earl, the big-eyed, level-headed ingénue; Anna Barrows, dignified, elderly and heavy, to suit her parts; Vincent Vicetti, the leading man, important and very handsome, but nevertheless having "Micky O'Leary" written unmistakably all over his wide-awake countenance; and Garth Nevin, the juvenile man, extremely blond, boyish as to face, but experienced as to heart.

Finally Joy took arms with Chapman Childs.

"Together, for us," she said cynically. "The clowns must end the procession."

Once inside their car, all immediately began the unembarrassed partial disrobing which was still the shock and the interest of Eric Hanson's present existence. When new among them he had tried to seek swift seclusion during the affair, but finding himself sometimes chattily followed and realizing that he did not at all count as a hindrance to the general scheme of getting comfortable, he neglected to deny himself the entertainment of watching and listening.

"Tomorrow's the day we celebrate," crooned Muncie, in his tiny underclothes, swinging sprite-like between two made-up sections.

"Tomorrow's the day I peroxide

your hair afresh," observed Joy, already without collar, belt or hairpins.

"No!" begged the child, dropping to his feet and shielding his mass of beautiful curls which nevertheless owed their saffron tint to the bottle. "Ma, is she? Is she?"

"Is she what?" sleepily asked Nina Tyrrell, bobbling about with the movement of the car, and quite frankly putting her curls into her hand-bag.

"Going to peroxide me tomorrow?"

"If she says so, she is," weakly said Miss Tyrrell.

"Ah!" purred Joy, her bright eyes dancing.

Though he laughed hysterically at her purposeful grimace, Muncie was rebellious to tears. "Gee!" he sniffed, "I'm glad you're not my mother."

"You bet you are!" scathingly corroborated Joy. "If everybody was your mother there wouldn't be a soul to do a thing for you."

"Aw, Joy!" remonstrated Nina. But it was Joy who washed the child, speeded him into his pink pajamas and prodded him into a berth. That done, she sought the only unmade section—where Hanson happened to be sitting—dropped down opposite to him and with rampant aloofness commenced to braid her hair.

Up the aisle Lawson had been making an officious progress, demanding that his weary company scrutinize a paper chronicling a change of route. Reaching Joy, he now tapped her brusquely upon the shoulder.

"Your attention, please," he commanded. But she never turned.

"Go 'way; don't wake me," she said, braiding indifferently.

"This is a matter of importance," fumed he.

"Put it in the water-cooler and keep it till tomorrow," she counseled. "I'm dreaming."

He went. Joy beckoned the approach of George, a haughty porter.

"We won't have a sound in this car tomorrow till we are ready to get up," she said. "Which may be one o'clock in the afternoon, or five. Don't tell

me what your rules require of you, for I know." She waved him away.

"I wish you would intrust me with some of your messages," commented Hanson. "What a fighter you are!"

"Have to be," explained Joy. "In this profession it is either bump or get bumped. So it's bump for me."

"Do you never feel the burden of it?" he questioned wonderingly. "Never wish there might be someone to 'bump' for you?"

He was speaking as much to the generic actress as to the individual woman. But the woman answered.

"Stop *gouging*," she said, getting up and pressing her hand, braid and all, against her heart as if it wearied her. "If I do, it is nothing at all to you."

She unceremoniously went away regardless of his vague gesture of apology. He sat, meditating, till the car had quieted. Then as he arose, he made a matter-of-fact speech—to the silence.

"It shall be something."

Quick upon the early dawn there followed a bright hot day through which the "Brink of Life" Company peacefully slept, hour upon hour. It jarred nowise on their repose that engines puffed and shrieked, that bells clanged, that passing cattle in cars bellowed most drearily, that brakemen made jostling passage through, that breakfast was called by the dining-car porter, that the sun gathered in burning intensity, that lunch was called, that much jerky coupling and uncoupling was done, and switching accomplished; but it was an immediate affront to their semi-conscious ears when all these soothing noises stopped, also motion, and there was nothing to hear or be heard but a steady, sea-like blowing of the wind. Then they all awakened.

"This is nuts," asserted Eula's voice, appreciative of the fact that she could dress without being shaken by train-motion.

"Then pass them to me, ere I famish," begged Chapman Childs. "What's the *beauteous* hour, any-body?"

"Six minutes to two, Chap," announced Anna Barrows's precise, elderly tone.

"Then it's the Fourth of July!" shriled a youthful treble.

"Put him out!" "Run him off!" "Get the hook!" rose a chorus.

The sheltering curtains of the berths began to billow out and gyrate.

"What's happened to us?" queried all. There was just one who knew.

"Ladies—" began Eric Hanson. Fully and immaculately garbed, he stood at the head of the aisle and addressed himself to the moving curtains. "Gentlemen—"

He was interrupted by hearty applause from every section.

"Ah, say 'Gurls and what's with youse,'" ordered Joy, unseen.

She had the gift of always being able to shut Hanson up, and he waited a silent while before recommencing.

"Our car is sidetracked. The Flyer has gone on and there has been a wreck on the connecting line. I am afraid we will be here for many hours."

"Heavings! where do I breakfast?" asked the hungry voice of the great Vicetti.

"I have no idea," answered Hanson with curt unconcern. His deference and hesitancy never extended to anything not in skirts.

Burlesque weeping swelled mournfully through the car. This irresponsible lightheartedness somewhat appalled Hanson. Here was a band of people sidetracked on a barren prairie in the Texas Panhandle with absolutely nothing in sight but a station and one or two shacks; they were miles from food; they were definitely certain of being unable to keep their business engagement for that evening. Yet they all clacked like a seminary picnic.

Assured of his starvation, Vicetti broke into fragments of rich song.

"Did Lawson die in the night?" queried Garth Nevin. "I don't hear him kicking."

"Mr. Lawson has taken a freight," volunteered Hanson, "to see if anything can be done, somehow."

As if this had been their cue, Nevin

and Childs started the quarrel scene from "Julius Caesar" and delivered it with amazing dignity and skill. It went as pat as if they had been rehearsing it for months. Concluding it, they flung aside their berth curtains, strode into the aisle, locked hands and fell into a forgiving embrace. Then they erased it all from their countenances.

Not long, and all were visible whether they strictly should have been or not. Crowding from the hot car, they breathed thankfully of the steady breeze and gloried in the sweep of prairie around them.

"Grand old Texas," announced Chapman Childs, making a present of it to everybody, with both his hands.

"God's country," said Vincent Vincti, rolling his eyes upward.

"Nobody home, apparently," criticized Joy. "But let's have breakfast." It was dinner-time, of course; still, one's first meal is always breakfast.

"I am indeed sorry," interposed Hanson, "to say that although I have telegraphed for supper to be sent us from the nearest section-house, on the soonest freight, it is impossible to get anything immediately."

"Still, we'll breakfast," quoth Joy cheerily. "Everybody dig up."

Under her generalship a sheet was spread on the ground for a tablecloth and upon it were soon set out two or three alcohol toilette lamps, each boiling its modicum of water. Anna Barrows, epicure enough to carry around her particular brand of coffee (to the disgust of hotels) made the star offering. Eula contributed a half can of condensed milk, its punched holes thriftily plugged with bits of chamois from her powder rag. Muncie's pockets disgorged loaf sugar. All the suitcases and grips held edibles of some sort.

A professional's valise will contain everything on earth but clothes. Without effort there appeared crackers, oranges, peaches, plums and bananas. Not as ostentatiously as might be, Garth Nevin handed Joy two cans of sardines.

"Kleptomania?" she suggested, with dark reproach.

"Legerdemain," he corrected.

"Everything's ready," she soon cried then to the porter who was glumly at watch. "Bring all the glasses you can find, George."

He stared surlily and she turned on him like lightning.

"Take that mug off you," she commanded, a dangerous dignity underlying her slack words. "Don't think because you are banana-colored that you are white and can sulk, for you aren't and can't. Trot out all the nigger you've got and cheer up."

George succumbed to mirth and his conceit collapsed.

"Ow, wow, wow! Miss," he roared helplessly, "you shuahly kill me."

"Stay dead, then," she remarked. He was a companionable and helpful darkey after that, especially when he found out that there was breakfast for him, too.

That nondescript meal was set upon with gusto and soon cleared. As Joy passed Childs his last shaving-cup full of coffee, he tenderly retained her hand and said:

"Star of the Prairie, thou best Brink-of-Lifer, what a prophetic-visaged babe thou must have been in the long ago for thy parents to have looked ahead to this far day and named thee 'Joy Devine.'"

"Never did," explained Joy. "They named me Joey Devin, but I lifted the useless 'e' out of the overture and put it in the last act where it could do some good."

"Bright girl," said Garth. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-four. Funny you don't know. It's been the same for eight years."

"Weren't we the Its to sign for a Summer engagement?" moaned Nina Tyrrell, over her coffee grounds.

"And now to tint my angel boy," pronounced Joy, "peroxide" in her eye.

After a chase she captured Muncie, backed him up against the *Mendoza's* side and made a thorough application of liquid to his curls.

"There," she finished approvingly. "In an hour you'll be goldier than a carrot. I'm surprised at you—willing to go on the stage at night to do pathetic stunts with your hair all Easter-eggy. It's a wonder the gallery does not give you the ha-ha every spiel you spiel." She shoved him into the car, to replace the bottle.

"What queer words you people use!" commented Eric Hanson, who had been an interested audience.

"Don't we?" was Joy's sharp reply. "And what we think is queerer still."

"I have annoyed you?" he asked quietly.

"Couldn't if you tried." She leaned indolently against the car and gazed past him at the interminable prairie.

"You objected to the classification 'you people,'" he pondered intuitively.

"Well, we have one or two human traits," she suggested, less aggressively. She was plainly interested in the free stretching of the prairie before her, and she dropped much of her defensive raillery. "Is not that restful?" she asked, of the wind-blown distances.

"No, it is too lonely," was his unhesitating reply.

"That is why it rests me. I see too many people, night and day."

"What other things rest you?" he questioned, taking advantage of her sudden tractability.

"Very few. Only one other thing, I think, and that is driving—with a good horse." She looked at him reminiscently. "It is almost happiness to climb into a buggy—anything that hasn't a top—and then go on and on, yet with no business at the end of the trip. The motion and the change make me forget how tiring life is. I am afraid of horses and don't want to do the driving myself—that would be responsibility again—some good driver must hold the reins. All I want is the traveling, the getting somewhere. Scenery isn't necessary. When I'm in a buggy all I ask of the scenery is that it shall keep from under the wheels."

She stopped because of a strange excitement in his face.

"You can be happy—when someone

else has the reins," he said somewhat breathlessly. "I wanted to know—just that."

He abruptly left her.

"You to the daffy-house," she remarked thoughtfully; but the commitment did not succeed in putting him out of her mind. Next, she listened with startled intentness to a sound within the car. "Someone crying?" she murmured. "Muncie!"

At her second imperative call the child appeared on the *Mendoza's* step. His small head was tilted rakishly and he essayed to whistle, the traitor tears still on his cheeks.

"Muncie, sweetheart, is it your hair?" asked Joy in contrition.

"No, it's my Fourth," smiled the child, his scorned tears creeping afresh.

"We'll celebrate," promised Joy, pulling him from the steps and escorting him into the midst of the others who were lolling in the car's shade. "Look at honey-boy," she implored. "He's all ready for a Fourth of July and we've got to give him one."

Ashamed of grief, Muncie was clawing through his pockets for a handkerchief without success. He made a light comedy gesture of resignation.

"Gadzooks," he mentioned airily, "some varlet hath filched me cambric."

His bluffing sturdiness troubled their hearts.

"We've got to do something," said Nevin. "But what?"

"Celebrate, of course," insisted Joy. "It will give us occupation. How long do we stay in this hole?" she demanded of Hanson as blackly as if the wreck had been his deed.

"That is hard to say," he deliberated. "If it were merely trouble on the track, a shoo-fly would solve the difficulty very shortly."

His esoteric word went to their light heads.

"A shoo-fly?" asked one.

A second brushed it aside.

A third frantically whistled for it.

"A *who-fly*?" demanded Chapman Childs.

"A shoo-fly," corroborated Joy. "I

have lots of them. In my top drawer. Among sachet bags."

Eric Hanson waited courteously till their flickering wits had died down.

"It is a temporary track built around an obstruction," he said. "But our matter is more serious. A bridge has been burned."

"Then we've loads of time," said Joy thankfully. "Now for it."

"What's it going to be?" asked Muncie, dancing anticipatively.

"First," she answered thoughtfully, "we'll make a flag."

Wanting little but noise, Muncie's face fell.

"Oof!" he grunted. "What's a flag?"

Joy swiftly lifted her hand and boxed him afar.

"What's a flag?" she echoed ringingly, with fierce love of country blazing to life in her eyes. "It's the whole thing. Didn't you know that?"

"I didn't," averred Muncie, coming right back even if to be boxed again. She was juggernaut, indeed, but he ever courted the wheels.

"Well, you know it now, don't you?"

"I do," said Muncie, rubbing.

"Aw, Joy," wailed Nina Tyrrell. "You might deafen him in one ear."

"That would make him just about right," contended Joy hardily, "for he hears twice as much now as he should. And not half enough!" She made the switch indignantly. As a fighter, she was untiring; either side or both would do; the fight was the thing. "Not half enough. The idea of a boy daring to ask 'What's a flag?' Muncie," she continued in a softer tone, dropping on one knee to get quite close to the child and putting her arm around him, "Muncie, your God and your flag, dear, are the two Great Things. They come first; even before your mother and father. When you say your prayers at night and ask a blessing for them and for yourself, after this ask it for your flag, too. Remember."

The boy looked puzzled, but he was loyal.

"I will, Joy," he promised. Then in obedience to an exaction in her eyes he gravely kissed her.

Jumping to her feet, Joy soon put everyone to work upon the flag. For its foundation she used part of the sheet and for the stripes she unconcernedly tore the thin inner curtain of her berth, which happened to be of the proper red.

George was petrified.

"Miss Joy," he urged miserably, "every po'tion o' this affaih'll be charged up to me when Ah gits through this run."

"Then we'll let you brush our pockets twice," promised she, ripping ahead. She had everybody, even the beautiful Vicetti, on hands and knees sewing stripes for dear life.

"But how they go, don't ask me," she confessed, puzzled. "Is it red at the bottom, or white, or what, and how much?"

"If the flag's the 'whole thing,'" quoted Muncie imperturbably, "why do you know nothing about it?"

She lifted her disengaged left hand and cuffed him successfully.

"It's a red stripe at the bottom," he contributed in response, "and red at the top. There are thirteen of them."

"How do you know?" she asked skeptically.

"I can see them—by shutting my eyes," he answered, squinting. He casually added, "There's a flag inside me—inside all boys."

At this her derisive glance dropped.

"And that's what keeps America safe," she whispered, bending low over her sewing.

"The rockets' red gla-a-re, The bombs bursting in a-air, Gave proof through the night, That our flag! Was! Still! The-e-ere," sang Chapman Childs, glooming fondly at his stitches.

"Listen to that, Joy," said Muncie, again suddenly heartbroken. "It takes bombs and a glare to make a real Fourth."

Compassionate Joy appealed pitifully to her fellows.

"Can't any of you rake up bombs and a glare?"

"In the wilderness!" scoffed Vicetti.

"I can," said Eric Hanson. "George!"

"Yas'r."



"Did I not see a rubber fire-bucket hanging in the vestibule?"

"Yas'r."

"Track-torpedoes in it?"

"Yas'r."

"And you ought to have a stick or two of signal fire."

"I suttin'ly has; yas'r."

"Bring it all here."

"Yas'r."

Hardly daring to believe the promise or his ears, Muncie crept adoringly to Hanson and wriggled his nervous little hand into the bigger one, awaiting developments.

"Before the flag-raising someone has to recite from the Declaration of Independence," said Joy. "Who knows it?"

"Who doesn't?" countered Childs. "We hear it every year."

"Start some," demanded she doubtfully.

He began rushingly.

"When in the course of—" Here he stopped, bereft.

"Might have guessed!" scoffed Joy.

"Grind it out, Garth, can you?"

"When in the *course*—"

"Oh, turn over, you're on your back!" said Joy indignantly. "Vicetti, pipe up."

"When in the course of human events—" Vicetti stopped.

"—it becomes necessary—" threw in Eula feverishly. She stopped.

Each glared hotly at the other.

"If that's the Declaration of Independence, I know it," said Muncie without enthusiasm.

"You, dearie?" cooed his mother, glancing around with pride.

"Yes; last Winter when we couldn't get an engagement and I had to go to school, the teacher made us learn ten lines of it for a punishment every time we were bad."

"Aw, Muncie!"

"And how bad were you?" anxiously inquired Chapman Childs.

"Well," said Muncie modestly, "I guess I know it all."

Out came George now with half a dozen signal sticks—the best kind of Greek fire—and two dozen track-

torpedoes—bombs with a vengeance. Hanson studied these in silence. And Muncie studied him.

"What are we to do for blue, as a background for stars?" asked Anna Barrows, still sewing fiercely.

"Garth knows," said Joy with her tenderest intonation. She shot a pleasant glance at his shirt.

He clutched it desperately.

"No, Joy," he insisted, tears in his voice, "it's the only one I have!"

"Take it off," she ordered with ruthless sweetness. "I have had an eye upon it from the beginning."

"My bonnie blue shirt! You *can't* have it. What shall I wear?"

"Your coat."

"In heat like this!"

"There's a good wind blowing. Go into the car and take it off. Hurry."

Nevin obeyed. He soon poked his head from a car window to call piteously:

"Hi! Haven't any of you fellows an extra shirt to lend?"

"Don't be foolish, Garth," advised Joy. "If anyone owned an extra shirt would he be on this job, do you suppose, Summer-touring Texas?"

When Nevin made a reappearance he was blithe and resigned, also engagingly presentable in a yellow pajama jacket buttoned sprucely over his original collar and blue starched shirt-bosom. Nothing but the unmoored suggestion about these adornments, slightly askew, testified that they were but remnants of his pride. Everything else he deposited like a sacrifice upon the altar of his country's flag.

That flag grew rapidly to completion. Then came supper, whistling importantly through on a freight. The supper was mostly cold corn-bread and fried pork, but it was washed down with copious draughts of iced tea from a tin milk-can, and was calming and filling. From a distance the ticket agent at the station, who had been kept woefully busy with wires concerning the wreck and was only now tasting of leisure, came to his door and gazed in the direction of their gathering hilarity, but they did not

coax him nearer, having a politic undesign of inviting information concerning the allowable disposition of torpedoes and signal fires.

When it came to practical action Eric Hanson was resourceful. He it was who procured pole and rope for the flag, and he only knew how to arrange rings and knots and ends to assure the proper flight of the emblem when raising time should come. Also, he enlisted the men's assistance in the task of loading an empty rubble car with stones and heavy trash intended to give the car sufficient weight to explode the track-torpedoes when it should roll over them.

Staggering along under his small additions, nosing intently at each torpedo clip by which it was anchored to the track, Muncie was celebrating to his heart's complete satisfaction, a satisfaction which swelled to rapture when Hanson told him that if he possessed the nerve he could mount the car and take deafening passage in it—at explosion time. Out of this idea a more spectacular one was evolved—the rubble car was to be Muncie's oratorical platform whence he was to recite all of his punishments that he could remember, and around the car were to be stationed the sticks of red fire, any or all of which he was at liberty to set ablaze such time as he chose during the oration. Hanson explained their construction to him and showed him how they practically ignited themselves when their caps were pried up. The delight of handling "real stuff" glowed like elfin fire in Muncie's tiny face, and his electrical hair stuck out all around it—a meteoric halo of red-gold.

When the preparations were completed the evening sky considerably clouded over an hour ahead of time, producing the proper dusk to serve as a foil for "bombs and a glare." Excitedly Muncie climbed to his eminence and, appreciating the value of footlights, immediately turned on two Greek fires which played fantastically over his gnomish self and glowed warmly upon the interested adults clustered below him. The affair imperceptibly

became very earnest. Quite gaily they all at the start had swung into the hymn "America," but before half-a-dozen bars had floated out upon the air, the singers had assumed attitudes and expressions akin to devotional, every man's head was bared, every woman's face became a prayer. Joy's voice, her most superb possession, seemed to ring against the stars. Frankly anxious for the song to reach its finish, Muncie emphasized that consummation by turning on *all* his lights and from the very heart of the dazzling glow he flung his entire little theatrical self into as exquisite a declamation as his memory permitted. The immortally beautiful words, sped by his childish treble, penetrated each older consciousness as if for the first time.

"And I don't remember any more," he finally cried, "so run up the flag."

In perfect silence the crude but beloved trophy crept up the staff and soon straightened royally in the breeze. Then Joy started "The Star-Spangled Banner," and no one was thoughtless enough to mar the charming solo she was able to make of it, but the chorus went with a mighty vim. The station agent was right in the middle of it, too, singing harder than anybody. The unmelodious Muncie breathed a sigh of relief when the last chorus reached its last note.

"The rubble car now," he yelled. "Let her go!"

As prearranged, sturdy hands took grappling hold, and with a running push gave the car sufficient impetus to send it a-roll down the track. If any boy in the land got a more ear-splitting, soul-searing riot of infernal "celebration" than Muncie Keith as he blazed racketing down the track, that boy is yet to be heard from. Indeed, he was soused with fearful happiness almost to the drowning point when he was pulled from the car and ministered unto. The day had been a flawless success.

When ears learned to be reconciled to a comfortable hush, and won back their ability to distinguish ordinary

sounds, those ears were faintly assailed by a long-drawn whistle, shrieking from considerable distance.

Eric Hanson raised a warning and explanatory hand.

"The bridge is repaired," he said. "Our train is coming through."

With wildness nearly everybody scurried to the *Mendoza* to retrieve scattered belongings, though Hanson volunteered the assurance that the onward whistle was nevertheless a quarter of an hour away.

"Don't go," he said, specifically aside to Joy. "I want a word."

"I don't," she said perversely, and continued with the others. After a pretense of doing something, she as perversely turned and went back to him.

He had put out the signal fires on the rubble car and was leaning against it, smoking his cigar. This he threw away when she approached.

"No need. I'm used to all sorts of rudeness," she commented curtly.

He made no response.

"Well," she advanced, nervous at the silence, "as a celebrater you proved yourself the only chump in the bunch who could do anything."

"Would it be presumption if I twisted your statement to intimate that I perhaps am no—'chump'?"

She took the repetition of the word to be a covert rebuke.

"Oh, I go with the slang!" she said with incisive unrepentance.

"Then I take the slang!" he announced quickly as a forerunner to more defined speech whose purpose was plainly in his eyes.

She stopped him.

"Cut it out," she commanded, clinging to her vulgarisms as to a defense. "It would be foolish of me to pretend not to know what you wish to say." Her voice trembled, but was softly cadenced. "I think I have seen it from the very first, Mr. Hanson, you have been so constantly good to me. The goodness has made me terribly happy, yet unhappy, too, for I knew that I must not let you go too far and I have shown you my worst side

always, thinking to deter you. So don't say any more. Cut it out."

"Why?" His brief speeches were ever as pregnant as volumes.

"The—the thing would work all wrong."

"For which of us?"

"For both."

"Not for me." Hours of argument could have established no more.

"Oh, for you most of all. Believe me. There is no chance for happiness in a marriage between a professional and a—man of business. It has been tried so often and always ends the same way. When the break comes she goes back to the stage and is contented; while he—I don't know what he does, but it can't be very pleasant, can it?"

"When the break comes—must it?"

"Inevitably."

"Again, why?"

"Because he—whoever he is—wants a home. She thinks she does, too. She gets so very, very weary of the road all Winter and just one miserable room all Summer—and then the humiliation of working the agencies—oh, you don't know anything about it—and she dreams of having a home. Then she gets it. That's when she finds out her mistake. Even though everything goes well for weeks or months, yet a time comes when she *starves* for the excitement that she used to have. You've heard the end of the story as often as I."

"You seem to leave love out of the question," he said, desponding.

"Leave love out?" she protested fiercely. "Would I have anguished myself to state awful facts if I did not lo—?"

Here she stopped; and he clenched his hands emotionally at her near admission, but with dogged chivalry he confined his arguments to her hypothetical case.

"If that business man, through the blessing of her love, could be unselfish enough to realize that his actress wife belonged to the world as well as to him—if he should say to her, when her restlessness came, 'Go, but come back to me when your heart turns again to me;

I shall always be waiting'—would *that* help?"

Joy reached out her hands as if to put them in his, then locked them together in resolute renunciation.

"No woman could take everything and give nothing," she said.

"But if he asked her for nothing?" pleaded Hanson.

"Why, it would be his only way of getting—all," she said faintly. Then she went back to her defensive hardness and flippancy. "Let us cheer up and regain our senses and our old selves. No harm has been done. We have just talked in tales. I have not refused anything. You have not asked anything. We are just as we were."

"Then I ask it now," he announced, quietly trenchant. "I want you to be my wife. Will you come to me?"

Pale and wordless, she studied him irresolutely.

His reserve momentarily left him and he cried with troubled earnestness:

"Joy, what I offer you is not home, the jail, but home, the nest, after flights. Will you come?"

Her face grew whiter and she moved decisively away from him.

"Give me time; let me think," she faltered. "You are too splendid a man to answer offhand, all at once. Let me go away—to think."

She hurried to the car and had almost disappeared inside when he spoke, having followed her.

"Joy."

She turned and bent toward him, her one hand on the car door, her other on the rail. The picture satisfied him so that he forbore for a while to speak. But at last he broke the silence.

"Joy," he asked, using so little emphasis that his words sounded casual, "if you *had* answered 'offhand, all at once,' what would the answer have been—then?"

Her quick reply was gentle and unpremeditated.

"It would have been 'no'—then," she said.



## YESTERDAY

By Archibald Sullivan

OUT of the amber-hearted dawn over a waveless sea,  
Steered in her barque of misty gray, Yesterday came to me;  
And all the flowers we had never plucked about her prow were set,  
And all the tears we'd tried to hide had made their petals wet.  
So out across eternity, safe in her barque of gray,  
Upon a stormless sapphire sea I sailed with Yesterday.



## GOOD OR BAD, WHICH?

"I UNDERSTAND he is the worst liar in town."  
"On the contrary, he is perhaps the best."

## LA BOMBE

Par Jean Reibrach

**S**UR la mer tourmentée où s'était aventurée leur jeunesse, l'amour de Serge Absamoff et de Nadège était comme un ilot fleuri. Leur rêve d'universel bonheur y étreignait du moins un peu de réel parmi tant de chimères où tendaient les sensibilités exacerbées de leurs cerveaux ingénus et barbares. Mais [si, peut-être, il s'ajoutait à leurs joies un peu des émois violents des fauves dont l'un, quelque jour, ne rentrera plus au gîte, cet amour demeurait à leurs yeux une contingence dont ils étaient prêts, à toute heure, à consentir le sacrifice, avec le sacrifice même de leur vie.

Ils accueillirent avec zèle Pierre Staveline. Un comité désignait pour un attentat contre un grand-duc ce mince garçon blond à qui ses dix-sept ans laissaient un air de fille. Doucement, il leur expliqua qu'il demeurerait, afin de dépiéter les surveillances, caché dans leur logis jusqu'au moment d'agir. Eux, au dehors, se renseigneraient. Ils l'avertiraient du jour où le grand-duc, ayant retenu une loge au théâtre, devrait, le soir, sortir en voiture de son hôtel. Lui, alors, irait, s'approcherait, de manière à n'avoir, pour lancer sa bombe, qu'à étendre le bras.

Nadège se récria :

— Mais elle te tuera aussi !

Pierre, d'un sourire, exprima qu'il l'entendait bien ainsi. Et le même sourire reparut sur ses lèvres, tandis que Serge, à son tour, demandait :

— Si jeune, ne regrettes-tu pas la vie ?

— On ne peut, répondit Pierre, regretter ce qu'on ignore !

Dans l'attente, tous trois vécurent des jours fraternals. Des pitiés étouf-

fées dans l'âme de Serge et de Nadège se ranimaient en présence du frère condamné dont l'héroïsme simple les émouvait. Ils l'entourèrent d'une étroite affection, s'ingénierent à lui prodiguer leurs fortifiantes tendresses. Mais Nadège, surtout, lui versait le charme de son sourire. Comme on couronnait de roses les victimes destinées à l'autel, elle semblait, de toute sa beauté, de l'éclat de ses yeux, de l'harmonie de ses attitudes et des parfums que mouvaient ses gestes, lui tresser des guirlandes et semer d'une jonchée de fleurs la route ardue qu'il allait gravir. Et elle-même recueillait dans son cœur la douceur qu'il en recevait et que lui témoignaient ses regards attendris.

Le premier, Serge s'inquiéta :

— Prends garde ! S'il allait t'aimer ?

— Oh ! douta Nadège.

Elle demeura pensive, pourtant ; car du rêve, en effet, commençait de noyer les claires prunelles de l'adolescent. Il coulait à des songeries lentes, dont il s'arrachait avec un sourire qui semblait un masque posé tout à coup. Puis, un soir, un peu de ses pensées lui échappa :

— Ah ! la vie ! Je l'ai toujours jugée abominable, infâme !... Et, parfois, il me semble qu'il existe des bonheurs que ma main aurait pu atteindre !...

— Pierre, proposa Serge. Si tu n'as pas la force, il est temps encore ! Un autre, peut-être...

— Non ! dit Pierre avec orgueil.

Et, plus doucement, il reprit :

— Ces bonheurs, on dirait qu'ils errent autour de moi, en moi aussi, par instants. L'impression en est à la fois comme de souffles venus de l'invisible



et de battements d'ailes à travers mon cœur...

Tout un flot d'idées nouvelles parut près de le soulever. Mais il retomba, secoua la tête et soupira :

— C'est le pressentiment sans doute des bonheurs que nous préparons pour d'autres ! C'est l'avenir en germe qui se lève dans mon cœur !

Il ajouta encore :

— Non ! Ce n'est rien ! Je suis fou ! Cela passera !... C'est passé !

Et le masque de son sourire se raccrocha.

Serge et Nadège échangèrent un regard grave. Lorsque tous deux se retrouvèrent seuls :

— Il t'aime ! dit Serge.

Nadège baissa les yeux. Puis, les relevant :

— Que faire ? Dois-je m'éloigner ?

— Non. Reste ! dit enfin Serge.

L'imminence de l'acte, cependant, commença d'appesantir leurs silences. Ils tressaillaient à des bruits, comme si de la porte soudain ouverte, la mort allait faire un signe dans l'ombre. Nadège ne souriait plus. Elle tenait ses regards abaissés, redoutait la grâce de ses poses, l'enroulement à ses membres des plis flottants de sa jupe et les gestes qui animaient l'air autour d'elle de la vie subtile des parfums. Mais elle souffrait, dans une conscience nouvelle d'être toute joie, toute consolation. Et une angoisse croissante l'étreignait. Tandis qu'elle voyait, par avance, Pierre étendu sanglant, les membres épars, elle se désespérait de recéler le rêve radieux qu'il n'osait entrevoir, de détenir l'immense bonheur d'aimer qui l'eût protégé comme une égide, l'eût acheminé vers la mort souriant, éperdu, ivre de beauté. Ah ! pourquoi était-il venu ?

Une fois encore, elle alla vers Serge :

— Laisse-moi m'éloigner ?

Serge, pensif, la regarda. Et, cette fois encore, il répondit :

— Non ! Reste !

Ce jour-là, il annonça :

— Pierre, le moment est venu !

— Je suis prêt ! dit Pierre.

Nadège, très pâle, lui tendit les mains :

— Nous aussi, dit-elle, nous irons ! Nous serons là, près de toi, avec toi !

— Oui ! approuva Serge.

Et il ajouta :

— Moi, je prendrai les devants pour surveiller le terrain, parer à l'imprévu.

Ensuite, ils se turent, comme on se tait, aux minutes d'adieu, quand toutes choses ont été dites.

Serge les quitta, les ayant embrassés. Leurs cœurs, alors, achevèrent de s'ouvrir.

— Nadège, dit Pierre, il me semble que c'est pour toi, afin que tu sois heureuse un jour, que je vais mourir. Mes yeux se fermeront sur ta pensée, sur ton image, et je te garderai en moi pour toujours !

Nadège eut un emportement soudain :

— Non ! ce n'est pas mon image que tu emporteras ! C'est moi tout entière ! Je t'aime ! Je partirai avec toi !

Au choc de leurs poitrines, Pierre agonisa :

— Nadia !.. Nad...

— Viens ! dit Nadège. Nous nous aimerons dans la mort !

Or, comme elle s'était dirigée vers le meuble où l'engin avait été déposé, elle jeta un cri. La place était vide.

— Trahison !.. Serge !

La même accusation leur était jaillie aux lèvres à tous deux. Leurs cœurs sautaient dans leurs poitrines, et leurs idées se heurtaient comme des oiseaux fous. Mais la volupté de la mort, qu'ils avaient pressentie déjà, continuait de les griser, au point qu'ils n'en concevaient point d'autre et qu'ils ne pouvaient plus y renoncer. Et un orgueil, en même temps, s'insurgeait, les livrait à nouveau, plus ardemment, à la folie du crime.

— Qu'importe l'arme ! dit Pierre. Allons !

Il prit son revolver, et ils allèrent. Près de l'hôtel du grand-duc, ils attendirent. Enfin, la porte fut ouverte. Les têtes des chevaux parurent.

— Va ! dit Nadège.

Mais comme il s'approchait, une clarté fulgura. Parmi le grand bruit qui suivait, ils virent tomber Serge qui en jetant la bombe les donnait l'un à l'autre.

## THE SECRET

By Elizabeth Daly

AGNES, standing disconsolate at the open window of her hospital room, thought she had never seen a more dreary sight than the deserted city street, dun-colored in the twilight of a cloudy June day. From the pavement below arose no click of horses' hoofs, no sound of passing footsteps, no human voice. She remembered that she had once thought the streets noisy; now even the departure and return of the ambulance, attended by the clanging of its harsh bells, would have seemed to her a delightful break in the mournful stillness.

Her wretchedness puzzled her. She had always been fond of solitude; but then she had never hitherto known the solitude of four bare walls and utter idleness—day passing into night without leaving joy or offering rest; hours heavy, sullen, languid. Sometimes things grew vague and obscure to her, and she almost fancied she was in a dream, from which she must awaken to some forgotten reality. At any rate, existence at present seemed anything but real, but she must try to bear it as long as the dream should last.

The worst of it was that the future began to take on the leaden tones of the present. She could not look forward with any interest to life outside the hospital walls. Such a state of mind might be morbid—was of course morbid; but she honestly felt that she could sink into death without a fear or a regret, merely because of the ennui into which she had fallen. It would probably depart when she was in the world again, but at present she could not see beyond it.

Twilight deepened in the streets, and a duller shadow overspread the sky. There was nothing to look forward to until morning. Supper had come and gone, and perhaps it could be considered time for bed. It was almost dark, and she might be able to sleep, and that would be another night passed! Yes, she would go to bed.

She turned from the window and put her hands up to unpin her braids, when she saw to her astonishment that she was not alone. Standing a few feet away from her, and looking at her with interest and composure, was a stranger.

The feeling of unreality that had hitherto tinged her consciousness came to her aid now; it so far dulled her perceptions that she was at first not frightened, but merely dazed and puzzled. Staring at him in silence, she saw that he was young and that he had a pleasant, cheerful, earnest face, pale, but with a golden pallor, as if his skin had been healthily brown before illness or some other cause had blanched it. She noticed in his countenance an expression of gentle, almost tender sensitiveness, lighted up by an eager, brilliant look—partly quizzical, too—which was curiously enhanced by the slight upward, outward tilt of his eyebrows—a humorous tilt, significant, she thought afterward, of tolerant good humor. It was not possible to imagine him irritable or clumsy-minded. And it was quite out of the question to suspect him of being intrusive, or evil, or mentally unhinged.

He stared at Agnes all this time, still without discomposure; presently his lips parted in a friendly smile, and he quietly observed:

"Hello!"

And then, just as she was on the point of crying out in aimless perturbation, he gave voice to five words so extraordinary that they froze in her any feeling save that of pure amazement. They were these, spoken with perfect sincerity, in a tone of amiable surprise:

"How did you come here?"

In the ensuing pause Agnes felt all her uneasiness vanish like smoke, though her wonder remained. Evidently he considered *her* the intruder; in that case he could not be conscious of intrusion on his own part. He was gazing into her eyes without the faintest hint of mockery.

"I was about to ask *you* that," she responded feebly. "This is my room, you know."

He glanced around with raised brows as if trying to verify her statement; then he looked back at her with his ingenuous smile, and shook his head.

"Pardon me," he answered gently, "it's mine." He added, after a moment, "Or at least it seems so to me. I was alone here a minute ago—and the door was locked, too; and as far as I can make out nothing is changed—except that you've come."

"I've come!" she cried. "Am I mad? Or perhaps you are. For surely I'm in my own room, and——"

"Excuse me for asking anything so silly," he interrupted, "but we really must get our bearings. Where *are* you—as far as you know?"

The burden of her loneliness, forgotten during this extraordinary incident, rushed back upon her. She answered faintly, "I'm in hospital."

"Where?"

"In New York."

"And this is your own room, you say? Where is the window?"

"Behind me; can't you see it?"

He shook his head and smiled.

"No; as far as I can see, the window is there"—he pointed toward a blank wall—"and the door is behind you. I was sitting here alone—thinking—and suddenly I looked up, and there you were before me. I had time to

rise before you noticed me. Don't go!" His voice grew anxious. "I—I was so awfully lonely."

"So was I." She was troubled, baffled, incredulous, but she felt no fear now, and the words came in spite of her. As she spoke them she realized that they were actually words of welcome to the apparition, whether real or ghostly.

"I should think you *would* be lonely, in hospital," he said with solicitude.

"Have you been very ill?"

"I'm all right now; but they will make me stay so long, and I am so bored and miserable."

"Perhaps you won't mind my intrusion so much, then?" he ventured. Weakly surprised, she found herself smiling at him. Certainly she seemed to be taking it very confidently, his doubtful account of himself. If he was telling the truth, moreover, what was he? How did he come there?

He seemed to be debating the latter question with himself, for after a pause he remarked thoughtfully:

"I suppose we're astral bodies, or something."

"Oh, don't say that! I have always been so afraid of seeing a ghost!" she exclaimed, half laughing. Nothing in the world could have seemed more substantial than he, and she was not afraid, but the idea, baldly expressed, shocked her.

"I don't think it's awful," responded her guest. "It just saved my life tonight. I hope you'll come—I mean I hope you'll let me come often."

"I don't know how it's done," she replied, again struggling with bewilderment. "Are you—oh, do you think you are really a ghost?"

"Are you?"

They stared at each other for a moment, and then burst out laughing. The sound seemed to clear the air, and she sat down opposite him, remarking with actual gaiety:

"I never dreamed I should have such an experience."

"Nor I—the occult isn't in my line. I say," with anxious curiosity, "neither of us has died suddenly, do you think?"

"I haven't, and you seem ever so alive."

"I am," he assured her. "I exist. I am not a warning."

"According to the psychical research people you should be, at least, a presentiment. And I ought to be screaming, ringing bells and fainting away. The funny part of it is that I'm not a bit afraid of you—that I don't persist in thinking you a delirious patient who's escaped from his nurse and got in here by mistake."

"No," he answered quietly, "whatever I may be, I'm not that."

"I wonder what would happen," continued Agnes, "if I should turn out the light. I believe you'd find yourself part of the Red King's dream."

"Not I!" confidently. "But please don't try the experiment just yet; you might vanish, or something, and then I should die of loneliness."

"Where are you?" she asked with sympathy. He hesitated, then frowned slightly, and answered with a flash of pain or trouble in his eyes:

"Oh, I—I am in prison."

As he finished, there was a noise behind him; the door of the room was pushed slowly open by the night nurse; and as the bright light of the hall entered, the figure of her guest faded before Agnes's eyes as a magic-lantern picture dissolves from a screen.

It is somewhat curious that although Agnes had never before placed the least faith in psychic phenomena, and had evinced as little interest as belief in the wonders recorded by those interested in such phenomena, she never for a moment felt the slightest doubt in the objective reality of her own particular ghost. She contended, while meditating on the strange episode, that while illusions of both sight and hearing might be quite possible to one in her weak and dreamy state, the imaginings of a feeble brain could not conceivably be endowed with that particular tilt of the eyebrow, that wistful yet genial grin. He was too individual, too obviously himself, to be merely part of her mentality. Somewhere, she was

sure, he existed, and somehow, by what means neither of them seemed to know, they had found each other.

As she went over their perplexing colloquy, word by word, she found herself much more startled by his declaration that he was in prison than by the strangeness of his visit. What could he have done? Without having any very definite ideas on the subject, she did seem to know that one does not languish in durance for trifling sins unless one is absolutely incapable of paying fines, or unless no one is to be found willing, for humane or other reasons, to "go bail." Why, then, was he not out on bail, unless, of course, the offense was lurid? It was strange and obscure and it naturally troubled her. If he should only come again she would ask him.

She did not like to doubt the probability of his coming; but when a particularly dreary interval had gone by she began to lose hope. The solitude of her captivity was terrible now; it had been bad before, but mingled with baffled hope and suspense it had become quite unendurable. She was beginning to despair, when, one night, as she sat in the dusk alone, a perfectly remembered voice spoke close beside her.

"You have come!" it said breathlessly.

He sat opposite her, his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped, leaning forward and looking with eagerness into her face. There was less gaiety in his demeanor on this occasion; he seemed to be taking the situation with a seriousness that quite matched her own. Perhaps he, too, had suffered in the interval?

"So *you* have come," she answered, smiling, and put out her hand, only to withdraw it, frightened. She did not wish to prove to herself that there was no one there.

"I'm glad to see you again," he continued, smiling back at her. "I've been so anxious—what happened the other night? You faded away."

"I faded? You went out like a candle."

"Did I, though?"

"Someone opened the door, and let the light in, and you vanished."

He laughed heartily. "Well, perhaps it's best that the person who enters should in doing so extinguish me. I should either terrify or perplex him."

"Probably both. And"—she hesitated—"I should have an even greater effect, shouldn't I, where you are?"

"You would, I assure you." He spoke carelessly, with a nonchalance, a lightness that seemed to warrant her asking, after an instant's deliberation, "How do you come to be there?"

He gave her a quick, rather strange look, and answered somewhat restrainingly, "Do you mind my being here?"

She was silent a moment, then responded, and she could hear that her tone was cold, "It depends on what you've done."

As she spoke her own words shocked her, they seemed so brutally insistent. Yet, after all, she reflected, one does explain a plight of that sort! If he were not a common transgressor, if his imprisonment was a martyrdom, why should he not discuss it? He had certainly volunteered the information that he was a prisoner. Thus fortified by reflection, she added, as he still gave her that queer, reticent look of one who is in doubt and wishes to keep his adversary in the same condition:

"You don't look as if you were in prison."

"You mean I'm not in stripes, or chained by the leg?" He laughed. Then he continued with perfect cheerfulness, "If I were to undergo such a thing—were to be convicted, of course you would never see me again. Or perhaps you wouldn't care to know a man who'd been in prison at all—on trial. I shouldn't blame you for that." He leaned his chin on his hand and viewed her calmly, as if taking a dispassionate interest in what she might be about to say.

"What have you done?" she repeated. "It all rests on that, doesn't it?"

There appeared between his eyes a

faint double line, a little involuntary frown of pain; otherwise his face did not change. But in that frown there was so much of implied anguish, whether caused by her words or his own thoughts, that it struck sharply on her heart. Tears rushed to her eyes; and when she put up her hands and wiped them away he was gone. It seemed to her inevitable that he had departed forever. She suddenly felt herself shaken with a strange passion of regret, and flinging herself on the bed she buried her face in the pillows and sobbed.

The bitterness of her misery did not subside; it deepened, rather, until it seemed ready to overwhelm her. She could hear herself saying, again and again, in the cool tones of well-bred disapprobation, "It depends on what you've done." She had not offered him comfort, she had not given him strength; he was gone, probably never to return; and perhaps he had done nothing.

But what if he were guilty? Ah, then indeed she was to be pitied! In that case he would descend into a pit of horror, and she would not have helped him by a single word. Nor would he ever know what his coming had been to her; never understand that from the first moment of his appearance she had recognized in his face something that called to her, belonged to her, changed for her the aspect of the world. She did not understand, could not believe that she loved this phantom, seen but twice and then so briefly; and yet what other meaning had her tears?

It rained one night, steadily, with an insistent murmur that sometimes rose, sometimes almost died. After dark, as Agnes lay awake, she could hear the water dripping softly, monotonously from some projection upon the stone window-ledge. The dripping sound grew louder after a while, and she rose to see if the rain were coming in; but there was no wind—it poured steadily down. Leaning on the sill, for the coolness of the night air, she could see faint white smudges that marked the



places of the lamps below; there were no night noises; the street was empty.

Standing there she drifted into a familiar train of thought, and wandered away upon it, conjuring up a vision of the mysterious companion, perhaps so far away, whose spirit, or *simulacrum*, had come to her in her black despondence, had comforted and charmed her, had filled her with a madness and a joy. To have seen him but twice, and to cling like this to the memory of his face and his voice was madness, she felt, and yet she could not—nor did she wish to—help it. Her ignorance of his identity, his guilt or freedom from guilt, absolutely counted for nothing now. She knew and admitted to herself that no imaginable consideration could make her turn from him if he ever came again.

And where was he? All alone? Was his smile extinguished, his face ravished with suffering? Had he forgotten her? She could bear to see him disfigured, changed, made terrible, but she could not bear to lose him.

As she turned and stood looking blankly into the darkness of the room, her thoughts of him seemed to converge into a picture more vivid than any she had ever seen in her mind's eye: and then, very gradually, in a manner she could not understand, the picture became real—it passed from her brain outside of her, and he stood before her in the darkness, faintly luminous, almost transparent. This time he looked intangible, ethereal, not for a moment to be mistaken for flesh and blood. He was indeed only a specter, not the clear, substantial image that she had seen before; and yet she welcomed him with a faint cry and held out her hands.

"I was afraid you would never come again!" No other words could have told half so well the condition of her mind, could have made so clear her joy and her remorse. The vision smiled—a dim, tender smile; but if it spoke she could not hear it; no words came to her across the space that separated them. She realized, however, that there was

nothing between them now but space and time; no doubts, no anger, no reserve. Since their last meeting chasms had been bridged, leagues of ground covered. No need of explanation—they were beyond the need of it, beyond the need of words.

As she gazed the figure faded, seemed to shrink, dwindle and become diffused into the thoughts of him that whirled through her mind. There was only darkness in the room, but there was peace in her heart. She felt as if she could endure anything now, even eternal parting, since they understood and trusted each other and were friends.

The rain dripped louder and louder; its murmur rose to the rush and roar of a waterfall, and beat against her eardrum in a thunderous throbbing, rhythmical yet wild. Darkness had closed in upon her, was suffocating her; she was trapped, smothered, gagged and bound. She turned her head with a tremendous, wrenching effort, burst the bonds of her right arm, and flung it clumsily outward. Voices were in her ear now, sounding loud, strange, insistent, but the words they spoke were unintelligible. After an interval the meaning seemed to resolve itself into the reiterated phrase of, "Wake up, it's all over. Wake up, it's all over."

A room dawned upon her now—her own room in the hospital, flooded with sunlight. Someone was shaking her gently by the shoulder. She felt irritated and fretful, and again moved her right arm—the left one did not seem to be under her control—flung it out aimlessly, wondering at its weight. It was caught and gently laid on the counterpane, and held there.

"Passing off," said a voice at the foot of the bed. "She will do now." And someone left the room.

"Took the ether very nicely," observed another at her left. She turned her head slowly and saw a nurse in a white cap. She felt that she must speak, exert herself.

"Has it stopped raining?" Her voice startled her; it did not sound like

her own; it was thin and indistinct, and the words all ran together.

"It hasn't been raining," answered the nurse. "No, don't turn yet. you mustn't turn."

Agnes lay still. Mists were clearing, clouds were lifting from her brain. She frowned, and asked a little more deliberately, "Was it all a dream, then?"

But before the nurse could answer she knew—knew without any telling. This sunlight was too clear, no shadows could live in it. There had been no convalescence, no—she cried out in her sudden dismay, and tried to lift her free arm, in a gesture of anguish. But it was gently held. She turned her head to the right, and in the blur and shock of her awakening she faced and knew him.

"It's you!" she said.

His quiet, intent look changed to one of surprise; then a new expression touched it, a gaze she could not understand. And in the maze of confused emotion she lost it, lost the whole world again, and drifted back into the neutral ground of shifting dreams.

She did not quite come to herself again until the next morning, when with her first conscious thought the event of yesterday was before her. This time, however, she also got the earlier impression of the room where the anesthetic had been given her—a room heavy with a hideous and suffocating odor, a room warm and still, and of a marble whiteness. There she had lain, pillowless, with folded hands, her face upturned to the faces that occasionally bent above her, one of which had hovered over her full of gentle preoccupation. She had stared into it forlornly, with desperate fortitude, and had seen it alter—softer still more—fill with a sudden intensity.

Then, as if to encourage her, it had lighted up in a brilliant smile—how well remembered!—and she had smiled back faintly as the ringing began in her ears.

So he existed in the flesh, he was real! Yet how infinitely farther apart

they were than they had been when she had fancied him a ghost!

She was quite herself when the nurse opened the door to the interne on his morning round. She knew who it would be, and was ready for him, and therefore felt some surprise to hear herself saying to him, quite without intention, and in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone:

"Have you ever been in prison?"

"In prison?" he smiled wonderingly.

"Yes." She would stand by it, now that she *had* said it.

"Why do you ask?"

"I want to know."

He stood at the foot of the bed with his hands on the rail, smiling down upon her, half puzzled, much amused. After a moment he answered, "As a matter of fact, no. But what an odd question!" Then, in a different tone, "How do you feel this morning?"

"Very well, thank you."

He came around and lightly touched her wrist; then he turned and spoke in a low voice to the nurse. When he finished he approached the foot of the bed again, and addressed Agnes once more.

"You are doing finely," he said.

"You are a model patient. Two weeks and we shall lose you."

She watched his face, tracing in it the various characteristics that she remembered, observing with a sort of timid joy the traits so familiar, yet somehow so elusive, which made him different from anyone else she had ever seen. He returned her gaze, a slight frown between his eyes, and finally asked with a little hesitation, "Aren't you going to tell me why you thought I had been in prison? It isn't only curiosity, it's—well, there's something rather odd I might confide in return."

"I can't explain; it was just in my mind, somehow," replied Agnes, adhering strictly to the truth.

"It's odd. You see, while you were being put to sleep yesterday"—she gave a little shiver of reminiscence—"I had that very word—prison—in mind."

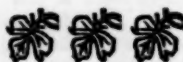
"You did!"

"Yes; I remember it perfectly. It had no great significance, though. I've been keeping rather hard at work lately, and I was a little cross and tired, and ungrateful enough to stigmatize this hospital—where I'm getting the very best training, and where I'm usually most contented and happy—as a prison. It's a long apprenticeship, you see, and in a big place like this it's sometimes a good deal of a hustle, and always confining; that was all I meant when I used the word—just because I was down for the moment. I love the job, you know; I'm devoted to the work. But it's undeniable that I said the word. To myself, of course. I don't think it's possible that I pronounced it audibly. And yet you must have heard it."

"Certainly it got into my head somehow. Perhaps I did hear you. Strange!" And she smiled. He nodded, with the cheerful glance that

seemed so startlingly familiar to her, and went quietly out of the room, closing the door.

Strangely enough, she never told him, not even long afterward, when, far away from the hospital and very close together indeed they talked of that first meeting in the ether-room, where he had bent over her and met the last conscious look of her eyes. He would often tell how surprised he had at first been when, on her waking, she had turned upon him so strange a stare, had greeted him with such intensity of recognition. Yet she never told him the dream, never even thought of doing so; it was buried in her heart, a thing delicate and obscure, that no one must ever find or comment on, or try to analyze. She felt she must keep it secret—the knowledge that however much he loved her she had loved him first and had even, in an existence that he had never shared, suffered something for his sake.



## THE CLOCK

By Elsa Barker

**B**EFORE the hour when thou wilt come to me,  
 Oh, with what laggard and deliberate pace  
 The minute-hand moves up the clock's white face!  
 Even desire is powerless to foresee  
 Its goal, meridian-pointing. Destiny  
 May but have wound her clock within an ace  
 Of the last notch, and by that moment's space  
 Silence may enter here—instead of thee!

The tick-tick is thy footsteps on the way,  
 Heard by my listening heart, and the hour-chime  
 Will be our old Earth-Mother's evening song,  
 Seeing her children happy. . . . Do not stay  
 Thy numbered steps, O love-retarding Time,  
 For joy is brief, and life is very long!

## A NOWADAYS CALL

By Madeline Bridges

THE HOSTESS (*with effusion*)—  
It is lovely to see you again,  
dear Lenore! (Be quiet, just a  
moment, sweetheart!)

THE CALLER—Indeed, it is lovely to  
meet after all these years! And to find  
you grown rich and fashionable.

THE HOSTESS—Oh, not fashionable  
—not *that*, of all things! We have  
grown rich, but everyone is rich, more  
or less, in these days!

THE CALLER—Not *every* one, sad to  
say!

THE HOSTESS—No; it seems we  
must always have the toilers. (Oh,  
naughty! naughty!) But, dear, before  
we say another word, I want you to  
look at—to be acquainted with my  
treasure. This is my own dear Rigo-  
letto! *Isn't* he lovely? (Come up,  
come up, to own one!) There, you may  
pet him if you like.

THE CALLER—I'm—a little afraid.  
Perhaps, when he stops barking—

THE HOSTESS—He may not stop!  
He generally barks all the time I have  
callers.

THE CALLER—That must be em-  
barrassing.

THE HOSTESS—Oh, it shows his love  
for me. And he often snaps at people,  
if he thinks I seem too interested in  
them.

THE CALLER—I hope you won't seem  
too interested in *me*! But can't you  
send him away while we talk?

THE HOSTESS—Send him away! Oh,  
no, I couldn't do *that*, but he may be  
quiet after a while. (Now, petsie, pet!  
go and lie on 'oo cushion.) I had that  
cushion sent from Paris— Oh, he  
won't go—he never does anything I tell  
him to do!

THE CALLER—Can't you teach him  
to mind?

THE HOSTESS—Perhaps—but I  
would not think of trying. He is so  
sweet just as he is! But tell me—  
haven't you a dear one, like this, to  
love? (Like my own pretty-pretty  
babe!)

THE CALLER—N-no, not exactly.  
I have two boys, though—

THE HOSTESS—Two boys? Oh-h—  
Indeed?— And *no* dog? Perhaps it is  
just as well—he might not care for  
children. (You wouldn't 'ike 'ittle  
boys, would you, 'Letto?) Two boys?  
What a burden of care!

THE CALLER—A burden that  
blesses—

THE HOSTESS—Oh, well—if you can  
feel so. (Now, dearest one, do lie still.  
Put head on muzzer's arm and go  
by-bye.) I was delighted to hear you  
had written a book.

THE CALLER—Yes, I must tell you  
about it.

THE HOSTESS—I am dying to hear—  
if only this darling would not make  
such a noise.

THE CALLER—It is a novel. I began  
it two years ago—

THE HOSTESS—Two years ago?  
Strange! It is just two years since  
Rigoletto came to me! I little  
dreamed how much he would mean in  
my life. Do you know, my husband  
thinks I am really absurd about him?

THE CALLER—I don't wonder!

THE HOSTESS—Ah—my dear, *you*  
know what men are! Every wife  
knows how little true sentiment—  
just look at those cunning ears. (What  
does my baby hear? Is it bad pussy  
cat?) But your book, dear? A novel?

THE CALLER—Yes, a story from real life.

THE HOSTESS—Oh, I wish you had known Rigoletto sooner—you might have put him in it! He is such an interesting creature. He does not care for candy in the least; and still more singular, he *hates* carriage riding! I am obliged to walk blocks and blocks with him, every day. He won't go with anyone else—

THE CALLER—That is a tax.

THE HOSTESS—No, no. A labor of love! (*Enter maid with cards. The hostess reads, "Mrs. Sittinstagh—Miss Sittinstagh."*) Show them in, Dora. Such charming people, Lenore—they have five lovely dogs.

THE CALLER—Oh, I will take my leave.

THE HOSTESS—Surely not, dear Lenore?

THE CALLER—For the present, but I shall call another time. Only, you must have a good visit with Rigoletto before I come. I suppose you don't see him often?

THE HOSTESS—Don't see him often? I see him every day—*all day*.

THE CALLER—I shall find him here when I come?

THE HOSTESS—Of course you will find him. (My sweetheart dear!) And when you see him again you will begin to love him. I *know* you will.

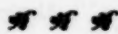
THE CALLER—Very likely—*when* I see him again! Good-bye!



## THE NEW SPRING

By Theodosia Garrison

THE long grief left her old, and then  
 Came Love and made her young again,  
 As though some newer, gentler Spring  
 Should start dead roses blossoming;  
 Old roses that have lain full long  
 In some forgotten book of song,  
 Brought from their darkness to be one  
 With lilting winds and rain and sun.  
 And as they too might bring away  
 From that dim volume where they lay  
 Some lyric hint, some song's perfume  
 To add its beauty to their bloom,  
 So Love awakes her heart that lies  
 Shrouded in fragrant memories,  
 And bids it bloom again and wake  
 Sweeter for that old sorrow's sake.



## WAS THIS PHILADELPHIA?

NATIVE—This is the heart of the city.

VISITOR—Your city seems to have heart failure.



## THE MEDDLERS

By Atkinson Kimball

I CONFESS that I live in my friends. They are my jewels, and after a woman has reached the age of seventy she is fortunate if she has any left to cherish.

When Alice Tiverton died I felt that I had lost, not my most precious gem, but a whole treasury. She had been my lifelong friend, and the only consolation I could find was to clasp more closely to my breast the dear people she left behind her. I speak figuratively, of course, in the case of Alice's husband. John bore his bereavement as a big, bluff man ought to bear it. That he didn't wear his heart on his sleeve only increased my respect for him. But with Alice's daughter, Evelyn, the clasp was very tangible. It evoked Alice more tenderly than words could have done and, in a sense, it renewed my youth. Evelyn was so much as her mother had been at her age.

She had never seemed more like the youthful Alice than when, one afternoon about a year after her mother's death, on my return from a series of the most dutiful and stupid of calls, I found her awaiting me in the drawing-room of the little apartment which in New York so often passes for home. In the waning light of the dull, March day I could see only her silhouette against the window, but her straight, slim figure and, above all, the erect poise of her head strongly suggested Alice as she had appeared in the numerous exaltations of which age with its disillusion had never been able to rob her.

Thank heaven, I have my share of intuition, and I knew at once that

something had happened. My intuition was confirmed when, as Evelyn rose and came forward to meet me, I noticed that she had exchanged the grays and lavenders which had of late marked her delicate emergence from mourning for the unrelieved black of the first months of her bereavement. She took my hand without a word and pressed her cool young lips upon my cheek.

"My dear child—" I began; but she interrupted me with a slight movement of her head toward the darkest corner of the room.

"Donald is here," she said.

I now made out his tall, thin figure standing and waiting deferentially, and then he, in his turn, came forward and took my hand, bowing over it in silence. So sepulchral an air in a man whose approaching marriage to Evelyn had just been announced after its prolonged postponement due to Alice's death increased my sense of something portentous.

"Do light the candles, Donald," I said as I sank into a chair.

He obeyed and sat down again. Evelyn also had reseated herself, and in the dim glow of the old candelabra on the chimneypiece we three confronted one another in the silence which, so far, had largely characterized our interview. I broke it.

"Well," I said, with a significant glance at Evelyn's black dress, "I do hope nobody's dead!"

She drew herself more erect and then answered, "My mother is dead."

I confess that at this I lost my patience, something that rarely happens to me.

"As if I had to be reminded," I said reproachfully, "of the death of my dearest friend whose loss is a constant sorrow to me."

"Living sorrows are the worst," Evelyn answered, and at her words my impatience melted away.

"Dear Evelyn," I said, "I know that you have come to tell me something terrible, something, I imagine, that involves Donald, too."

"Yes, it does involve Donald."

The one involved did not, even now, make any sign. He sat looking at Evelyn in the high sorrow of a lover who sees his loved one suffer.

"Come, be brave," I said. "Tell me everything. Perhaps I can help you."

"No one can help us."

I saw that my injunction to be brave was unnecessary. Evelyn fixed on me the brightest, the dryest of eyes; in the queerest, the coldest of tones, she made her announcement.

"It is simply that my father is going to be married."

"John is going to be married!" I repeated, relaxing in my chair under the shock of it.

My surprise and disappointment gave way, however, almost immediately to a feeling that I had been obtuse in not foreseeing the event. John was not of a nature to raise the womanly expectation of a sentimental fidelity to a wife's memory. It was merely a case of the average man doing the usual thing. Of course, these considerations would be ineffective with Evelyn. I saw that I should have to do again what I have been doing all my life: helping people in their trouble and giving them advice which they seldom follow.

"Understand me, Aunt Overton" (Evelyn always called me aunt), "I do not consider myself my father's keeper. He has a perfect right to marry. I care only for his happiness. It's the woman in the case."

"And who is the woman in the case?" Her voice came as from the depths. "The horrible Laura Blossom."

"Laura Blossom, Laura Blossom?"

I repeated. "I don't believe I ever heard of her. How is she horrible?"

"She's common, she's vulgar, she's brazen, she's brutal."

"Oh, come, I don't believe she's so bad as *that*!" Donald spoke for the first time.

Evelyn turned her fine, delicate head, the head of an idealist, in his direction.

"Have you become her champion?" she demanded.

"Of course, I don't know her very well," he apologized.

"But what is she?" I asked, dimly desirous of intervening between the lovers.

Evelyn answered promptly. "She's the widow of a wealthy manufacturer of proprietary medicines. She's a living testimonial to the virtues of his specifics, if she takes them."

Even in the circumstances I smiled at Evelyn's characterization of her future stepmother.

"Oh, if you are going to scrutinize the sources of wealth—" I protested, but Evelyn went on without heeding me.

"And she belongs to the same set as Mr. Shire and Mrs. Gunn."

It was difficult, I admit, for me to meet this information. I had to treat it as lightly as I could.

"Perhaps she's in it, but not of it. And, besides, that delectable circle probably believes in assuming a vice though you have it not. They've simply seen too many Pinero plays. Real fastness, dear Evelyn, has never been indigenous to American soil."

Still, Evelyn did not heed me.

"And *that* after my mother!"

"I know. It's terrible, it's terrible. When were you told of it?"

"Only this afternoon. My father brought her home to luncheon. He said that he hoped she would be a second mother to me."

I sighed with exasperation. It was just like John to make a remark of that kind in perfect sincerity.

"It must have been a trying situation for Mrs. Blossom. What did the poor woman say?"

"She didn't say anything. She made a move, I think, to kiss me, and I thought I could detect moisture in her blue-china eyes."

"Her tears, at least, speak well for her," I said; "I never did like glib women. Let us hope she'll make your father happy. At any rate, there's one comfort. You have each other."

"We have each other?"

"You have Donald."

Evelyn gazed at me blankly for an instant, and then she said, "Donald and I have broken our engagement."

"You've broken your engagement!"

"It is now my duty to stay at my father's side, to protect and shield him, to keep my mother's memory inviolate."

Her face wore the rapt expression of a novice about to take the veil. It was just like Evelyn to form such an absurd resolution. Her mother, in the same circumstances, would have done the same thing; and neither of them would have heeded my remonstrances. I now understood why Evelyn had relapsed into deepest mourning. In order to keep her mother's memory alive, she was accentuating the fact that she was dead. I felt a sudden sympathy for the poor young man who had waited so long and, at the last, so fruitlessly.

"And how do you accept the situation, Donald?" I asked; but Evelyn answered for him.

"He accepts it in a spirit of joyful sacrifice."

The gloomy figure in the corner was so far from suggesting joy that I could not restrain a laugh; and the sound probably brought to Evelyn a realization of the late hour. At any rate, she rose to go. It was not until the door had closed behind the couple that I wondered whether Evelyn had been offended by my laughter.

Early in June John Tiverton led the blushing Laura Blossom to the altar, but unfortunately I could not be present at the ceremony. In fact, only a few days after my interview with Donald and Evelyn I was summoned to my

sister's home in Michigan. She had worked so zealously, poor woman, as chairman of a committee to build a free hospital that she was in a fit condition to become one of its patients. After we had happily patched her up and put her on her feet again my visit lengthened in an atmosphere of women's clubs and strenuous culture; and it was late in September before I returned to New York. Evelyn's infrequent letters had told me little about the situation in the Tiverton household, and naturally I lost no time before calling at the great house in Stuyvesant Square.

As I sat in the large cool drawing-room after the maid had taken up my card it made me feel queer to think that a new mistress had taken Alice's place. I noticed that the pictures, the bric-à-brac, even the furniture, remained precisely in the same positions as of old. This was doubtless part of Evelyn's pious purpose to keep her mother's memory inviolate. I felt queerer still when, at last, the portières parted and, instead of Evelyn, there came into the room a person whom I at once identified as the second Mrs. Tiverton.

She was big in every one of her three dimensions, and as she advanced she diffused a faint, commingled scent of all the flowers that blow.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said simply, holding out a plump, well-groomed hand on which the diamonds glittered. "I was meaning to call."

Her manner was surprisingly cordial, but as I followed her example and sat down I resolved not to meet her more than half-way.

"Is Evelyn out this morning?" I asked.

"I believe she's making aprons for the Hottentots. Isn't it lucky?"

"For the Hottentots?"

"For us."

"I'm very sorry not to see her," I said.

"What I mean," Mrs. Tiverton explained, "is that I want to meet my enemies alone and face to face."

"And who are your enemies?" I

queried in bewilderment at the oddness of her speech.

"You are."

She gave a wry little laugh in which I involuntarily joined her. She was very blond and very bloomy; I should like to own some blue china the color of her eyes; and the way she was set up reminded me of a ship in full sail, all canvas drawing, every rope taut. It seemed a miracle that a woman could be so large without being loose. Above all she emanated health. Evelyn's characterization of her came back to me. She was a living testimonial to the virtues of the defunct Mr. Blossom's specifics. Still, I could not help trusting that these included a nice bromide compound. The second Mrs. Tiverton seemed about as near being nervous as a woman of her temperament could be.

"Well, if I'm your enemy," I said, "I'll try at least to be a friendly one."

"That's what I want. I want you to understand my position. I want you to put yourself in my place. Above all, I want to explain my marriage. I want you to know that I struggled against marrying John, that I even ran away."

"That was very good of you, but, don't you see, that was the very way to make him follow?"

"Come, Mrs. Overton, don't be nasty even if you do loathe me. I know Evelyn loathes me."

"And I suppose you loathe her?"

"No, I like her. I believe there's a great deal of good in Evelyn."

Her patronizing words annoyed me a little.

"I should say there was good in her," I murmured. "Think of her love for her father, think of the way she cherishes her mother's memory."

Laura Tiverton fixed me for a moment with her bright blue eyes, and then she broke out vehemently, "Make her cherish it less! Make her drop that ridiculous mourning; make her marry Donald McKay; make her get out of the house!"

This was a queer enough request in

view of the affection she had just expressed for Evelyn.

"I'm afraid you overestimate my powers," I laughed.

"Oh, you can do it, you can do it. You have so much influence with Evelyn. And then, you are a woman of the world."

"But why should I interfere?"

"Can't you see that our life here is perfect hell?"

It was evident that she was desperately miserable, although her use of that word would not alone, I fancy, have shown it. I could not remain insensible to the difficulty of her position nor to a certain physical magnetism about her that appealed to me in spite of myself; but what really determined my decision was a realization that Evelyn was probably as unhappy as her step-mother. The girl's attitude was essentially quixotic, and the best thing for everyone concerned, especially for Donald McKay, would be her speedy marriage.

"I will do what I can," I promised after a moment.

"You dear woman!" Laura Tiverton exclaimed.

She rose and grasped my hand with a gesture which, for an instant, I thought would carry it to her lips. Yet, with this expression of her gratitude, her interest in the matter seemed to drop. She took a turn up and down the long room, and when she reentered herself she introduced, of all things, the subject of the Paris styles. I felt with resentment that, having accomplished her purpose, she had no further use for me; and I made haste to bring my call to a close.

On taking my leave, however, I ventured to ask, "And does John see that your life here is perfect—ah—hell?"

"Oh, John!" Laura Tiverton shrugged her immense, handsome shoulders. "John doesn't see *anything*."

I have learned from experience that when one plays the part of god of the machine one usually gets caught in the cogs one sets in motion. Evelyn, surely, had gained nothing by inter-

fering with the lives of others. I had never felt any sympathy with her attitude, but I had known that it would be impossible for me to change it in the first flush of her resolution. Now, perhaps, after months of prosaic practice, all that was needed was a slight push in the right direction.

Just how to administer the push, however, was not very clear when the girl called upon me, one afternoon about a week after my talk with her stepmother. She came armed with opera-glasses and a hand-book, so I knew she would drag my poor old bones through Central Park in a wary pursuit of belated birds, shy wildflowers, timid trees, or something; but after we were wandering along the paths, littered with yellow leaves which had dropped ingloriously before the frost had touched them, the hand-book remained unopened and the glasses unused.

There was a deal of constraint in her manner. It was like her to be as silent about her sorrow as Laura had been voluble about hers. The freedom with which Evelyn had spoken on the day she announced John's engagement had been the result of the great stress under which she was then laboring. My heart went out to the poor girl who was throwing her own and Donald's youth to a mistaken ideal of duty; and I was casting about in my mind for some way to introduce the subject, when she suddenly grasped my arm.

We had reached the Mall, and, following her glance, I saw what had brought her to a standstill. It was the sight of Laura Tiverton seated on a bench with Mr. Shire. His pale face was turned toward her rosy one, and both of them were too interested in their conversation to notice us.

A moment later we had turned our backs on the devoted pair, and Evelyn was fairly pulling me after her toward the Fifty-ninth street entrance. Before we reached it, however, we, too, had sunk upon a bench.

"Now, you see what I suffer!" she almost panted.

"I confess I don't," I answered.

I was mystified by her excitement; but her next speech enlightened me somewhat.

"Isn't it terrible the way she's seen with Mr. Shire?"

"Of course, Shire hasn't the sweetest reputation," I said, "but few men have for that matter. It surely doesn't blast a woman's reputation simply to be seen with him. You must remember that Laura is a friend of his."

"Well, he's not a friend of *hers*!"

"Dear Evelyn, please be kind enough to tell me exactly what you mean."

"I mean it's perfectly disgusting the way they run around together. They go everywhere. Father never goes with them. And they write to each other, too."

I admit that this was rather startling news.

"But I understood that Shire was interested in Amy Gunn?"

"He is interested in Mrs. Gunn. But he's interested in Laura, too. He's interested in everyone."

"Well, then there's safety in numbers."

Evelyn slowly shook her head.

"Men are not as monogamous as women are," she said.

"What an expression, Evelyn!"

It made me feel queer to have her talk so frankly with me on such a subject. It's wonderful what idealists will sometimes stick their noses into and how much knowledge innocence sometimes has. Of course Laura was very indiscreet to go out alone with Shire so much; but I was far from sharing Evelyn's suspicion of their potential relations. Still, Evelyn had had more opportunities for observation than I. Laura's remark, "I struggled, I even ran away," came back to me. Had John been able to inspire her with a deep and abiding love? Had Evelyn's presence in the house, sepulchral as it doubtless was, driven her to desperate remedies? Laura's ideal of life was probably to have as good a time as possible.

"And now," Evelyn said with all her fervor, "you see why I must stay



at my father's side. I must save him. I must save her."

In view of the revelation of Laura's intimacy with Shire, I saw I could do nothing in redemption of my promise to her. It would be useless to urge Evelyn, in the impetus of her new exaltation, to marry Donald.

"You had better be sure that they need saving," was the most I could say at the moment. "I fully agree with you," I added, "that it's terrible that Laura should be intimate with such people."

"If we could only drive them away from her!" Evelyn sighed.

"If we only could!" I echoed.

There came, two days later, the beginning of the end of our drama. Evelyn had telephoned me to come to dinner, explaining that we should be alone, as her father was going to attend a public function of some sort, and Laura would be dining out with unspecified persons at an unspecified place. She added the injunction to come early.

It was shortly after five when I reached the Tiverton residence, but, on entering the drawing-room, I saw that we should not be alone. Donald McKay had preceded me, and after greeting me he and Evelyn reseated themselves in opposite corners. I felt immediately, as I had before their other interview with me, that something had happened. In this case it was Donald who spoke first.

"Aunt Overton," he said, "I wish to lay a certain matter before you. I wish to get your advice. Evelyn, in my opinion, has taken a very unwarrantable step."

I could see that he was heroically performing a painful duty. I looked inquiringly toward Evelyn, and she answered my glance with the effect of ignoring Donald.

"I have simply got rid of Mrs. Gunn and Mr. Shire."

"You have got rid of them?"

"I told Laura that they couldn't come here any longer. I said their presence was an insult to my mother's memory."

"That was diplomatic of you, I must say!" I gasped. "How did poor Laura take it?"

"Oh, she cried a little."

"I should think she might!"

It interested me to see the ideality of her mother taking the blunt form which, hitherto, I had never suspected her of inheriting from John. Even the idea that she had been blunt had not occurred to her. She had nerved herself, and had done the deed, and the effect of it was that she sat more erect as if in conscious righteousness, with unwonted color in her cheeks.

"What I claim," Donald pursued, addressing me and ignoring Evelyn as she had ignored him, "is that Evelyn has no right to interfere with Laura's life. She isn't Laura's keeper. And, anyway, Laura's all right."

The quarrel between them was evidently very real and earnest.

"Well, if we only got rid of the precious pair!" I said. "But please don't drive the poor things off the face of the earth. Shire is in full flight already. On my way here I happened to catch sight of him in a cab. The driver was buried under a pyramid of luggage."

I said this to gain time, but it wasn't necessary. At that moment a maid came into the room with a telegram for Evelyn. As she read it her color deepened, and when she had finished she sprang to her feet.

"There," she cried triumphantly, still addressing me, "read that, and see if I wasn't justified!"

I read the telegram aloud. It ran as follows:

"Gone North. Seven o'clock. Due recent events. Will write John."

"LAURA."

"This is surely strange enough," I said, "but how does it justify you?"

"I've driven matters to a crisis. I've made her take a decisive step. Rather than give her friends up, she has given up us."

"Yes, you've made a beastly mess of it," Donald threw out, but Evelyn paid no attention to him.

Laura's sudden departure was perfectly inexplicable to me. Evelyn's explanation didn't explain it. It was ridiculous to suppose that Laura would go away merely because Evelyn had forbidden her to receive Mrs. Gunn and Mr. Shire. After a moment even Evelyn saw the absurdity of her explanation.

She was still standing. Suddenly her eyes dilated; she grasped my wrist.

"You saw Mr. Shire in a cab with luggage! She has gone away with him!"

Again I gasped. I was taken off my feet, and then, in a flash, I saw that Evelyn was right. All the pieces fitted together. It was one of those intuitional visions with which women are gifted. What else could explain Laura's intimacy with Shire, what else could explain her sudden flight? I remembered her air of desperation during my interview with her; I remembered that she said she had struggled against marrying John; and the image of Shire's white face in the cab added the last touch of significance.

"Well," I said, when I had recovered somewhat, "if you've driven her to that, you are justified. I dare say," I went on, out of my impatience with the whole affair, "that John will forget Laura about as soon as he forgot your mother."

Instead of answering, Evelyn strode to the door. Involuntarily, I rose and followed her, and Donald followed me.

"Where are you going? What are you going to do?" I called.

She paused half-way up the stairs, and said over her shoulder in the tone I knew so well: "I'm going for my wraps. I'm going to Laura. My place is at her side. It may not be too late to save her."

"She isn't worth saving!" I cried, but she had flashed out of sight.

I turned helplessly toward Donald.

"Of course she'll go," I said. "And of course I'll have to go with her."

"And of course I'll go, too." The young man was in the deepest depths of gloom. "I guess I had better telephone for a carriage."

In the carriage, while we were being driven uptown, the three of us were silent. It was a dreary ride. I could understand perfectly now how Evelyn's prohibition had forced Laura to take a step she had probably long been contemplating. Revulsion against the woman swept over me. To think that I had promised to intercede in her behalf!

What I could not understand was Evelyn's plan to "save" her, as she had expressed it. How could she, and why should she? I imagined that Evelyn had no definite plan. She was simply acting on a high impulse. Of course, it did her heart credit even if it didn't do her head any; but, after all, her virtue seemed to lean to vice's side. I had a vision of the three of us confronting Shire and Laura in the station. In the circumstances, it was a comfort to have Donald with us. I didn't know what he'd do or what he wouldn't do, but at least he was a man, a pillar of strength for us weak women to lean on in the emergency.

As we neared Forty-second street I caught a glimpse of the clock on the Grand Central Station. It was just seven! We were too late! Laura was lost, but we were saved. I did not, however, inform my companions of this fact. I merely sank back in relief and security, a security that wrapped me as a garment after the carriage stopped and we had got out.

We entered the station, and there, near the door, on one of the pew-like seats, sat Laura! Thank heaven, she was alone. She was eagerly watching the incoming stream of travelers in which, for the moment, our little party was hidden. But Evelyn stepped briskly forward to Laura's side. Although I was some feet from her, I could distinguish her words and her cold, incisive tone.

"Laura," she said, "I received your telegram, and I have come to take you home."

For an instant Laura did not seem to comprehend. She cast a frightened glance over her shoulder at the clock; she took a last look at the people stream-

ing through the doorways; and then, without a word, she rose. As she faced us I could see that she looked worn, she looked old, she looked thin in spite of all her plumpness.

It was a strange meeting. Donald lifted his hat politely, and I bowed; but Laura did not seem to notice us. As Evelyn had led the way into the station so she led the way out with Laura's arm drawn through her own.

If the drive to the station had been dreary, you can imagine what our return was. The silence was simply palpable. Donald, in his embarrassment, bit the end of an unlighted cigar. Evelyn and Laura were beyond showing any embarrassment, Laura because she was in the depths, Evelyn because she was on the heights.

Well, we had "saved" Laura, but what had we saved her from, and what had we saved her for? The Tiverton house could never again be her home after John should have learned of her escapade. The situation became more impossible the more I revolved it.

How impossible it was began to dawn even on Evelyn, I think, after we had reached the house. We didn't stop to remove our wraps, but filed into the drawing-room, and sat down mechanically. I suppose that something would have happened in a moment. Either Evelyn would have spoken or Laura would have sought her room or Donald, with a sense of the delicacy of the situation, would have departed; but, before there was time for any of these occurrences, something else had taken place. A key clicked in the front door, and, an instant later, John Tiverton's large-featured face appeared between the portières. He looked troubled; he didn't speak either to Donald or myself. A suspicion crossed my mind that he had already heard of his wife's misadventure.

"Laura," he said, "I have bad news for you." He hesitated, and then added with an effort, "Amy Gunn and Shire have gone to Europe together."

Laura, at this announcement, covered her face with her hands, and, for the first and last time I ever saw her

do so, she burst into tears. John, like most men, didn't relish scenes, and he discreetly withdrew, leaving the three of us to gaze at Laura where she sobbed. There were dismay and perplexity written on Evelyn's face; I don't know what my own showed. Donald continued to chew his unlighted cigar in a disgusting manner.

"It's all over, it's all over!" Laura swayed back and forth in her chair, still pressing her hands against her face. "And I tried so hard to save her. I tried so hard to save her!"

Evelyn seemed turned to stone and of course Donald did not speak, so it devolved on me to clear up our mystification if I could.

"To save her?" I repeated.

"To save her from him, to save her from herself!"

Laura at last removed her hands from her face, and dropped them in her lap. I could find nothing to say at the moment, and she went on, looking at me with her poor washed-out eyes.

"I had reason to suspect that they were going on the seven-o'clock train. But they threw me off the scent; they gave me the slip. I waited, I waited, but they didn't come."

"Then you went to the station to stop them?"

"To stop them. To go with them, if necessary."

The heroism of this, even if it was quixotic, sealed my lips, but more than that, my shame. Evelyn was following every word of Laura's with a drawn face that made me wonder whether she comprehended.

"You see, Amy was my dearest friend," Laura went on, still addressing me. "We were school-girls together. But she was always foolish. She was foolish when she married Mr. Gunn. She was foolish afterward. And then she got into that nasty set and met that disgusting Shire. I reasoned with them, with both of them. I told them they mustn't see each other. I talked like a Dutch uncle, or, rather, a Dutch aunt."

She smiled wanly. The reason of her intimacy with Shire was now made

clear to me, and my shame deepened. There was a momentary silence, and then Evelyn abruptly arose. She came over beside Laura's chair; she sank to her knees; she buried her face in her lap; she burst, in her turn, into tears.

"Laura," she wailed, "I know you can never forgive me, but I went to the station because I thought that *you* were going away with Mr. Shire."

The effect of these words on Laura was to banish, for the moment, even her grief over Mrs. Gunn's elopement. She drew herself erect, and her face hardened. I saw that she never could forgive Evelyn. Still, she patted her head as if in token of forgiveness.

"I suppose I've compromised myself with everybody," she said with almost indelicate frankness, and then she turned toward me. "I suppose *you* thought that?" she asked.

"Yes, I did," I answered, standing by my guns manfully. "And I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself."

"Oh, *you're* a woman of the world," she said lightly, but with the effect of irony, and I saw that she never could forgive *me*.

She turned toward Donald.

"And, of course, *you* thought it?"

"No, I didn't. I told Evelyn that you were all right."

"That was generous of you. I must say." But her irony, with him, was very kindly.

I confess that his asseveration of a superior insight vexed me.

"Well," I said, "you were very quiet about it in the carriage."

"What could I do with two women on my hands?"

This speech, naturally, did not allay my vexation, and I decided to explain, if I couldn't justify myself.

"Laura, I want you to realize that circumstances were very much against you. Your intimacy with Shire was hard to explain; your telegram was harder. Besides that, I happened to see Shire, this evening, evidently starting on a journey. And, furthermore when I had that talk with you about Evelyn and her ridiculous mourning you impressed me as a desperate wo-

man. You also told me, you remember, that you struggled against marrying John, that you even ran away."

"I *was* desperate. I was desperate about Amy. I was in such a state that even Evelyn got on my nerves. But I *did* run away," she added. "I ran away because I knew how Evelyn would hate me as a stepmother."

This was the last straw. Evelyn got up from her place beside Laura, and strode toward the door, but, before reaching it, she turned on us her white face.

"I am going out into the world," she announced with subdued fervor. "I am going to devote my whole life to good works. *That* only can be my expiation."

Before I could take in the preposterousness of this Donald, on his part, had risen.

"You must go with *me*," he said.

"With *you*? Then you don't loathe me?"

"Evelyn, I *love* you."

He held out his arms to her. She hesitated a moment, and then she flew into them. This was the signal for a second burst of tears on her part, happier, however, than the first.

"The trouble with you, dear," Donald said, as he cherished her, "is that you are too good and pure for this world. You can't recognize evil when you see it. You need a man, like me, to keep you straight."

Evelyn did not reply; and, at this psychical moment, John's face again appeared between the portières. He gave a quick glance at the enfolded lovers, and then at his wife.

"They're naming the happy day," Laura called out, and her tone told him that she had recovered from the first shock of Amy Gunn's elopement.

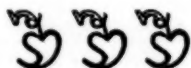
He came into the room in his comfortable slippers and smoking-jacket, pinching my arm in belated greeting as he passed me, and sat down on the arm of Laura's chair.

"Well," he said, smiling down at her, while his arm stole around her shoulders, and her arm stole around him where he used to have a waist when

he courted Alice, "let us hope it will be a happy day, a happy day for all of us."

I did not wonder, until afterward, whether his words veiled a relief at

losing Evelyn to her patient lover. What struck me at the moment, with the two happy couples before me, was simply the fact that I had witnessed the close of a comedy.



## FOREVER

By Richard Kirk

O SWEET, forever?  
     Yea, forever, Sweet!  
     *Grow we not old?*  
     Yea, Love, the heart must beat  
     Feebler, the hand grow cold—  
     But love dies never!

O Sweet, forever?  
     Yea, forever, Sweet!  
     *Must we not die?*  
     Yea, Love, we two shall greet  
     Death's herald by-and-bye—  
     But love dies never!

O Sweet, forever?  
     Yea, forever, Sweet!  
     *How may that be?*  
     The days, the years are fleet,  
     But love's eternity  
     Is ours forever!



## THE REASON

"WELL! Well!" surprisedly commented the patent-churn man, as the village brass band tore rapidly past, smashing out tintinnabulatory strains as they went, "those fellows are pretty nearly on a dead run! What makes them march so fast?"

"Trying to git away from the music, I guess," replied the landlord of the Pruntytown tavern, who was a pessimistic old grouch, anyhow.



## LE PETIT HABITANT

By Cameron Nelles Wilson

YÉTIVE'S face was absolutely impassive as she awaited her husband in their springless buckboard. Her quick eye glanced disinterestedly along the only street of the unattractive Muskoka settlement, resting finally upon a motley collection of wares in front of the squat frame store. There lay Indian baskets and small birch-bark canoes, gorgeously wrought moccasins, table-mats of sweet grass interwoven with porcupine quills, all heaped incongruously among homely calicoes, coarse footwear and slowly wilting vegetables.

Neil Crawford staggered to the wagon under a box of groceries which he hoisted with an effort into its place.

"There, little girl—that's the last! 'Twill keep the wolf from the door for a time, at any rate. And now for home!"

He gathered up the reins and clucked to the wiry roan, giving a parting wave at the keeper of stores as they rattled down the dusty roadway. Yétive viewed the excitement indifferently.

"A bit tired, dear?" The man's voice was low, full-toned. "Never mind—we'll be home by four o'clock and that will be the end of our journeying for a while. Cheer up, Yétive! Home—think of it! Home—home—home!"

A note of passionate enthusiasm rang in Crawford's words as one long arm encircled the slender shoulders of his wife. Without a reply, she stared across the rock-strewn fields to where Lake Rosseau glimmered through a stretch of pines, gazing wistfully at the vanishing smoke of a saw-mill that droned among the trees. In its

raucous rhythm were echoed the pulsations of her own nerve-centres; the rasping noise stood for all that she was leaving behind; it was the very spirit of life which she felt to be slowly slipping into oblivion. Her heart grew heavy as she looked ahead at the uneven road, reaching into the deep, untried silences of this strange, wild land.

The noonday sun beat down upon the young settler and his bride. Crickets sang lustily among the parched grasses; ox-eyed daisies and stalks of early golden-rod flashed among gray rocks, while breaths of pine-scented freshness swept from the dense growth on each side as the pony clattered deeper into the woodland fastnesses.

In vain Crawford tried to arouse Yétive from her abstraction; her lack of interest pained him. There flashed into his mind ugly stories to which he had lent unheeding ears but which now seemed to clamor for a hearing. He had laughed when Babette Duclos told him Yétive was marrying out of pique—that her heart belonged to one of her own race, a handsome, barbarous young riverman whose prowess was the talk of the lumber-camps. He had ripped out a firm oath at Gustave Porcheron when asked if Bruno Lemieux was going North to keep Yétive from becoming lonely. More than one subtle suggestion had been whispered to him during his stay in the gossipy French-Canadian village where he had won his wife—the garrulous Rapides des Joachims. But Yétive's outbursts of passionate assurance, her pretty coquetties, invariably conquered his fears and allayed his jealousy.

He stole a shy glance at the blanched cheeks and haggard eyes of his wife. A feeling of pity rushed over him at her evident misery. Drawing in the horse, he jumped from the wagon, skirted the road for a few yards, and returned with a great handful of luscious raspberries. These he tendered with boyish pleasure.

"Thanks—no—Ah'm no hungree," she said peevishly, studying the slim, ungloved hands resting on her knees.

Neil's face flushed crimson as the berries dropped to the ground. No sooner had he remounted the seat than a huge form lumbered across the road a short distance in front of them. The pony evinced a momentary interest before settling down to a measured jog. Yétive's face had grown deathly white and she clung to Neil's arm in a panic of terror.

"No danger, wife!" he laughed. "A mammy b'ar stuffed so full of berries she'd lick your hand if she met you in the dark. Look at those pa'tridges—beauties, every one of them! Next week we'll have some of them roasted at our own fireside. You're a bully cook, too, dearie!" His r's burred softly from his tongue as he rattled on, trying in various ways to arouse her flagging spirits.

Crawford loved every turn of the familiar road, every clump of trees, every wayside cabin. To Yétive it all looked hard, unyielding, tropically unlike the trim gardens and verdant fields of her own loved province.

For a long time they drove on in embarrassed silence. A sudden turn and the buckboard stopped at the edge of a small clearing, in the centre of which stood a low-roofed log-house. Its door was closed, its blinds down; a deathlike silence pervaded the place. Crawford had been absent only a fortnight, but in that time weeds had run riot over the narrow pathway leading among the rocks. Toward the west a patch of potatoes struggled to extract a meager nourishment from the poor soil, while dejected rows of carrots, beets and onions ran unevenly over a second enclosure. At a far corner of

the clearing stood a rude shelter for the farm animals.

"Not a bad place, is it, dear?" Neil's words had an anxious ring, but in his honest blue eyes shone a natural pride in the home which he had hewn for himself and Yétive in the wilderness.

His wife was silent, responseless. She looked a delicate, incongruous figure as she sat stiffly in the dusty wagon. Her muslin dress was crumpled from their long journey; the brilliant flowers in her wedding-hat seemed less jaunty as they drooped among the cheap laces twining amid their stems. Her lips trembled as tears gathered in her black, wistful eyes. The loneliness, the dreariness of her surroundings crept from the indescribable silence and settled in the dark, emptied corners of her heart. In a wild abandon of despair, she broke into a fit of hysterical weeping.

"*Dieu merci! Dieu merci!* Ah no want for to stay. You tak' me home—onlee tak' me home! Ah'm so lonelee—so lonelee!"

Lifting her to the ground, Neil gently led her to the dwelling.

"Yétive—is it Bruno Lemieux?"

Crawford's fingers paused among the meshes of a snow-shoe which he was mending and his eyes sought the face of his wife. Six months had passed since their marriage—six months of uncertainty and growing doubt on Neil's part, of discontent and recrimination on that of Yétive.

"Was it—is it Bruno?" A rough hand rested for a moment on her knee as they sat before the open fire; and his gaze was strangely compelling. Two candles burned on the table beside them, fluttering in the wind that screamed dismally around the corners of the house, causing the strings of corn and red peppers hanging from the rafters to sway weirdly in the half-light.

Yétive's answer was calmly dispassionate.

"Bruno Lemieux, he loove me—Ah loove him!"

Neil had long expected this confession, but it came like a blow. He rose from his chair and stumbled toward the door. The rush and sough of the gale echoed the words of his wife in mournful cadences.

"I must water the horse, Yéti—don't wait up—it's late."

As the door closed she lifted the iron kettle from the crane, blew out one spluttering candle and with the other in hand climbed the rude ladder leading to their sleeping-loft.

After a long time Neil returned. Placing a pile of furs upon the floor in front of the fire he threw himself wearily upon them. In spite of mental agitation, in spite of heart-hunger, he was soon fast asleep.

In the morning he announced his intention of going into the village for a day or so to buy supplies. Yéti bent over a pan of savory bacon, but made no reply. The morning mists seemed doubly chill to Crawford as he stared through the small, uncurtained panes.

Breakfast was a silent farce. Having finished, Neil stood irresolutely in the doorway, clad in a heavy sheep-skin coat. His handsome face wore a look of painful embarrassment as he twirled his beaver cap with the awkwardness of a guilty boy. He spoke huskily, timidly.

"Is there anything you'd like? You won't be lonely?"

"Mabbe yes—mabbe non. Ah care not for the lonesome an' Ah do not scare at the b'ars now!"

Yéti laughed flippantly; the sound jarred her husband's overwrought feelings. For the moment he hated her; he longed to get away, out of her sight, away from the sound of her tiresome patois.

"Good-bye, Yéti," he said, turning from her.

"*Bo' jou, m'sieur—bo' jou!*" came her response, with a side glance and a contemptuous toss of her well-poised head. "Onlee tak' care of the b'ars! Jack Frost he nip you nose ef you don't mind out!"

Her mirthless laugh rang tauntingly

in his ears as with unnecessary energy she shook out her dishcloth before the blaze. With a strange catch in his throat, he stepped into the chill morning air.

He was gone. Yéti stole to the window and watched the disappearing sleigh with its fur-clad occupant. No sooner had they faded from view than she turned toward the roaring fire, clapping her hands with the abandon of a happy child. She gloried in her solitude, glad of the respite, free to gratify her moods unwatched by an eye which noted every change in the recklessness of her demeanor. She pirouetted madly about the room in a fantastic *pas de seul*, caroling the words of a foolish French chanson that carried her in fancy to the Rapides des Joachims. The amorous refrain conjured up a picture of the dashing Bruno and, in contrast, that of honest Neil Crawford. In comparison the Scotchman suffered.

Exhausted at length she sank into a chair, then, laughing unrestrainedly, lifted from the mantel-shelf her work-basket of Indian craft, and drew closer to the ruddy blaze. She gazed absently into the heart of the snapping logs, her thoughts far, far away.

The bondage would not last long, she thought. In the Spring or early Summer she would slip away; she would leave this cold, dreary land, which had become to her as the abomination of desolation; she would seek again the Rapides des Joachims—its bonhomie, its free living, its free speaking. She would seek out Bruno—would leave the cold, impassionate Neil.

Suddenly her gaze became riveted upon the bit of sewing in her lap. Her cheeks crimsoned as with a dull horror she realized the great fact that had before been meaningless and of no moment. Her heart tore at its bounds, her brain spun dizzily. A thousand lights danced before her wide-strained eyes. Claspings the unfinished garment to her breast, she held her cheeks hard against the cheap cotton folds.

"*Le petit habitant—le petit habitant,*" she murmured in awe-hushed voice.

The narrow confines of the homely room weighed down upon her, crushing her with a sense of miserable impotency. Her dependence upon Crawford grated harshly upon her sensibilities; a wild, unreasoning craving for freedom possessed her. She hated her husband, who was to her as ice, as the chill winds which swept across his own lake-country, as the dim skies which arched drearily above the unending timber limits.

The silence at last became unbearable. Tossing aside her sewing she donned her cloak and toque of squirrel skin, threw wide the door, and stepped into the open.

The day was gray and still. A rabbit dashed across the clearing, scattering a cloud of powdery snow as it kicked its small heels into the air. Yéti ve sped along the familiar woodland paths. The boughs above her rocked and swayed grotesquely as the wind screamed through naked branches. Beyond the interlacing trees stretched the steely sky; on all sides an illimitable vista of tall, straight pines and snow-wrapped underbrush. Her cheeks burned; her eyes sparkled feverishly; her brain throbbed in merciless beatings, irregular, nerve-racking. A dull, nameless horror held her as she fled like some wild forest creature through the quiet retreats, an oppressing sense as of bloodguiltiness heavy upon her.

Strange voices called to her through the whispering, mysterious stillness—voices of children, faint, querulous, agonizing. Infantile forms danced before her eyes, chubby baby faces mocked her with startling grimaces or, wistfully appealing, smiled mockingly at her ere mingling with the chill desolation of forest-growth. She leaned against a pine, closing her eyes to the harrowing vision. But her eyelids failed to shut out the fleeting forms, the laughing, winsome faces.

Then, at once, the whole moving, sighing world of trees seemed to grow silent as if stilled in awed expectancy. She became oblivious of her surroundings, drawn in splendid solitude away

from her own kind, fearfully, wonderfully alone.

Through a golden haze, her sight became centred upon two figures, Mother and Child—the Vision of Divine Maternity. She had seen the picture before—in churches, in religious books, in the Virgin's Grotto at Our Lady of Lourdes—but never anything like this! The Child smiled as no other child had ever smiled upon her, and Yéti ve sank to the ground with bowed head and trembling, wordless lips. She lifted her eyes reverently, but saw only the gray reaches of snow-clad trees, the broad expanse of sunless sky.

"*Mère de Dieu! Mère de Dieu!*" she whispered entreatingly, her arms upraised, her eyes dilated and luminous.

She arose and hastened on—whither she knew not, cared not. The witchery of the wild woods was upon her, impelling her to haste, goading her into frenzied action. On, she wandered until acute bodily fatigue stayed her flagging steps.

Turning, she retraced her path with a haste as feverish as that which had carried her into the dreary woodland depths. Some subtle force dragged her on, though her feet were stinging with cold, her limbs aching with dull throbs of pain. The afternoon grayness grew more somber, the silence intense. The trees assumed new shapes, fantastic contours, as living embodiments of grim monstrosity.

Her pace increased to a run; behind her swarmed unseen forms that dogged her steps, she feared to look back, feared to advance into the gathering gloom where vague nothings became arresting realities. The pines loomed about her, their gaunt arms stretching toward her like the tentacles of some abnormal creature bent on drawing her into hideous darkness. The solitude was appalling. Her heavy skirts clung to her tired limbs as she stumbled on, guided more by the homing instinct than by any reasoning function of her fagged brain.

Once she screamed aloud in terror as a snow-laden branch swept against her shoulder with detaining force. All

nature seemed against her, a world grotesquely cruel, possessed of mystic strength, merciless and cold.

It seemed centuries before she staggered to the edge of the clearing, in the centre of which her City of Refuge stood outlined in the growing darkness.

She sank exhausted on the ice-fringed step, reached with numb hands for the latch and crawled on trembling knees into the welcome shelter.

The fire had long since died out; the house was scarcely less cold than the bleak outdoors. As in a dream she kindled a blaze and mechanically filled the kettle from a wooden bucket. In a short time the room glowed with light and warmth as the lonely house merged softly into the deepening dusk. The crimson glare of hickory logs played upon the simple, handmade furniture, upon the few gleaming pans, upon the neat row of blue china plates.

Yétive was fond of the place in a way, but tonight it failed to appeal to her. The room seemed colorless, lacking in character, devoid of interest or meaning. Neil's absence produced a note of unrest in the homeliness of her surroundings. She could settle down to nothing; the feverishness of the day was still upon her, burning her mind, calling forth weird brain-creations that both fascinated and repelled.

Suddenly with a pang of reproach she remembered her cow and the few unproductive hens. Having prepared food for all, she threw a shawl over her head and burdened with two wooden pails made her way to the humble barn.

The air was keen, biting; she was glad to get back to the house, where she crouched low before the lapping flames. The stillness was horrible, uncanny, full of dread. A distant howl floated through the frosty air and she cowered trembling as her eyes sought the dark corners of the room. She wished Neil would come; she was so miserably alone, so crushed by vague, unholy terrors.

Then to the soul of Yétive was manifested the second miracle of that day of solitude. With the force of an iconoclast her love for her husband swept

over her awakened sensibilities, crushing her old idols, shattering their much-kissed feet of clay, leaving no vestige of what had once been the dominating power of her life.

It was Neil she wanted; she was wild with longing for him, heartsick for need of him. She craved the sound of his voice, the kindly, passionate caress of his lips, the touch of his strong, capable fingers—the security, the abiding calm of his dear presence.

With an involuntary cry she sprang to the door. Nothing but the inevitable barrier of trees met her gaze—hideous, arboreal contortions that had terrorized her during the day.

But no longer did the branches stretch toward her as a many-limbed creature, ogreish and cruel. Like the wide-embracing arms of a benign motherhood they waved and tossed in the dim grayness, crooning, yearning, comforting. Yétive extended her hands toward the friendly boughs as she stood in the low doorway, her slight form outlined against the cheery glow within. Into the delicate, shallow features there crept a new radiance, illumining, transforming, recreative. The soul of the woman had at last entered the circle of that mystic Brotherhood, that deep-souled Humanity which lives and loves and suffers—the shibboleth to which had been shrouded in the ceremonies of her own selfishness and lack of perception.

She closed the door gently. Throwing herself upon the floor by Crawford's empty chair, she buried her face in the homely, patchwork cushions. At the edge of the hearth lay the small unfinished garment which she caught frantically to her breast, hugging it, crooning over it, kissing it with all the pent-up passion of aroused maternity.

"*Le petit habitant! Le petit habitant!* Mah leetle bebbie," she murmured again and again, dwelling on the words with loving tenderness.

She raised her head to find Neil standing above her.

With face aglow she sprang to her feet. There was no mistaking the transformation. In a wild, joyful wonder



Neil held her in his arms. For a long time she rested there, passive, strangely content.

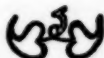
Then he drew a large bundle into the firelight. Together they sat on the bearskin rug, examining its contents like two happy children. Simple necessities were there and a few humble luxuries. At last but one parcel remained unopened.

Neil placed it in his wife's lap and turned his head aside in embarrassed silence. A low cry broke from Yétive's lips as she held up in the golden glow a small knitted jacket and two pairs of diminutive woolen shoes.

"For the little chap, Yétive—for the little farmer," he whispered, leaning toward her. Her arms encircled his neck and in a silence sacred and unbroken their lips met.

"There is something else, dearie!" His eyes shone as he drew a packet of crumpled letters from his pocket. Three were in the writing of her sister, the capricious Lisette; a fourth bore the illiterate, wavering characters of Bruno's unpracticed pen.

Without opening this much-thumbed missive Yétive placed it upon the crackling logs. Together they watched it shrivel into eternal blackness.



## TO THE 'CELLO

By Martha Gilbert Dickinson Bianchi

THOU who hast sought as we—and never found—  
 And seeking still doth haunt the Shades of sound,  
 We hear thy footfall thread the darks of pain,  
 Through crypts of Being pass—repass again.  
 The sea reverberates within thy chorded strings,  
 Her swimming ecstasies and fair dead drowned things;  
 The wind doth sigh with thee from off far Pisgah heights,  
 Fraught with the trembling mystery of forest nights;  
 Ranging through starry passions unassuaged and wise  
 As doth the Poet's lone soul—his hell and paradise,  
 Throughout our buried life a wanderer divine  
 Bliss cannot bar thee in nor agony confine;  
 Thine adorations lift a daring breath  
 Across the barricades of love and death;  
 Thou art to us what thou canst never know—  
 The lifted veil of beauty here below.



## FIXING THE DATE

"YOU were married before the war, weren't you?"  
 "Well, yes, the fighting did start a few weeks after the ceremony."

## THE VALKYRIE

By Lucian Price

IF Knowlton had wandered out on the red granite cliffs of the cape intending to finish his book, he was wasting his time. For the last hour he had been staring at the same page; there was only a little daylight left, and besides, he had come out here with a reasonable certainty that he was to be interrupted before he left the place. But the sun dropped down behind the slender spire of a church over toward the village before he stirred or turned another page.

The interruption, which he was expecting, came quite abruptly. Without prelude of any kind the monologue of the surf became an accompaniment to a clear and powerful soprano voice:

"Ho-yo-to-ho!  
Ho-yo-to-ho!  
Hei-a-ha!  
Hei-a-ho!"

The pure shrieks of the Valkyrie cry started a chorus of echoes as if from a band of the wild sisters hidden among the near-by rocks. The call was repeated with more of a weird frenzy, and if Knowlton had taken the trouble to turn his head he might have seen the Valkyrie herself, poised gallantly on a big bronze pedestal of rock, and certainly looking larger than human in the pale green evening light. The wind moved her skirts and hair, and with every ascent of her voice she tossed back her head and flung up an imaginary spear.

But Knowlton did not choose to look around, and the Valkyrie finished by jumping down and making her way to him across the ledges. She seated herself on a shelf of rock which formed a part of a level platform where the

cliff rose sheer some ten feet out of deep water, and, nursing one knee with knit fingers, eyed him censoriously.

"You have no appreciation for art; you have no soul for beauty," she began. "Here you sit reading a book while the west is full of colors, and you never turned your head to hear my Valkyrie shout, though I may tell you that I never gave it better on an opening night."

Knowlton glanced up with the mute patience of a person under persecution and unable to escape.

"Let me see how far you have read," she demanded, taking it away from him. "Page sixty-eight! Why, that is exactly where you were this morning on the veranda. This grows worse and worse. You haven't even been reading. What do you find in Marcus Aurelius, anyhow?" she asked, as she returned the book.

"A great deal."

"Isn't he rather stupid?"

"That depends upon what you care for."

"I remember reading one sentence of him once which said something like this, 'Live each day as if it were to be thy last.' I don't think he and I have much in common."

"It isn't likely."

"Well—will you please put him down and talk to me?"

"What do you want to talk about?"

"You."

"Why should I be the subject of the discussion?"

"There are a number of reasons. I will give you a few of them. First, you ignored me at breakfast; at nine A.M. you declined to make one of a sailing

party because you knew I expected to go—no, don't pretend you didn't; there was no such breakneck haste about that call on old Mrs. Lister—"

"Hadn't we better start back for the village?" he interrupted. "The evenings grow quite chilly after sunset, and it wouldn't do for you to catch a cold just before your Autumn rehearsals."

"Your stratagem is really the most delightful thing about you," she laughed maliciously. "I wish you would allow yourself a little more of it. This solicitude about my health is touching."

He blushed with resentment and she went on:

"But I will explain, in order to relieve your anxiety, that I make it a point of pride not to baby my throat. If one begins, there is no place to stop, and I find my plan works admirably. I get soaked in thunder showers with only a little damage to my frock and shoes, and I have fewer colds than anyone in the company. So we needn't interrupt this discussion on my account. As I was saying, Mrs. Lister is going to be here the rest of the week; and last of all, you stayed away from the dance last night because you were pretty sure that I was going to be there."

"I am sorry if I have seemed rude."

"Wouldn't it be more to the point if you were to say, 'I am sorry I have been rude'?"

"I am sorry I have been rude," chanted Knowlton in a tone like the response of a perfunctory church member.

"Heavens! The apology is worse than the offense. What is the matter with you?"

"You know as well as I do," said Knowlton, raising his eyes slowly to hers.

"If I did, should I be asking you to tell me?"

"As likely as not."

"Will you tell me?"

"Yes. It is on account of Geoffrey."

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough?"

"No. You know that Geoff and I are only fooling. No one ever takes a tenor seriously."

"Then why am I to suppose you are not fooling now?" asked Knowlton.

"Do you believe I am?" she demanded with sudden earnestness, and caught his eyes for a short, steady look.

He stirred uneasily and turned away.

"If you are giving yourself anxiety on Geoffrey's account, you may save it in the future," she resumed.

"What is the use of going over all this again? We had it all yesterday, you know."

"Yes. How was it? You have your work, your independence, your friends, your ambitions—and I am a disturbing element."

She told each item mockingly on a separate finger.

"You show a grasp of the situation," remarked Knowlton briefly.

"I think it's a very flimsy one," was her reply.

He rose abruptly and threw down his book.

"Will you listen to me for a few minutes?" he asked. "We dispensed with all superfluities, such as reserve and innuendo, three days ago, you remember—Wednesday at ten A.M., to be perfectly exact. You have already mastered the rudiments of the case, but I am going to enlarge a little. Listen:

"First, I do not believe tenors are not to be taken seriously—at least, old Geoff is an exception. He is the best friend a man ever had, and he is cursing me tonight for the luck which ever brought us three together. I shall make it right in the end, because I intend to do the square thing by him, and because we have been through too much together to let a thing like this end it. But this isn't all. You know what my plans are. I have told you. And you know what my failings are. I have told you those, too; because I thought that one confidence deserved another, and I did not expect you to take advantage of your knowledge. I have to fight my way along inch by

inch—in more ways than one—and everything I have accomplished so far I have done by the contradiction of all that you call up in me; and you know this. I do mean to make a place for myself; I do mean to keep things up with one or two friends, and if I have decided that I can do without the things which seem so important to most men, I don't see by what right you undertake to batter down all these resolutions.

"What makes you try to?" he went on in a gentler tone. "There is nothing very attractive about me. I am not even well off in a worldly way, and unless my indifference has piqued you, I can't imagine why you persist. What is the sense of our carrying on this wretched contest? You know, if you will only stop to think, that there is nothing about me that you want except my defeat. I haven't been such a tremendous go in the law, but I have saved my self-respect, a few friends and some of the illusions which I started with. I don't consider myself wealthy, but I don't consider myself indigent. Why can't you be contented to let me keep these little possessions in peace? They will be poor trophies for you, and they are all I have."

He said this with the simple earnestness of a child.

"A week ago," he resumed, "I came up here for a little vacation—I get two weeks a year—and to be with Geoffrey. At the present time Geoffrey is ready to shoot me down, and I have had exactly two hours of sleep since yesterday morning. I don't know whether this is the rate at which an opera company lives, but I know that it is too swift for a mere attorney."

"Now, one of two things is going to happen; either you and I are going to forget that we are acquainted, and you are going to pick things up where you left off with Geoffrey, or I am going to leave this place in one hour. I can catch the 7.43 train. Which is it to be?"

"You always were for doing things with such a rush!" yawned his companion with perfect composure.

"Perhaps I have my reasons."

"I don't believe there is anything in the world for which you haven't at least a dozen reasons."

"You are wandering from the subject."

"Perhaps I have my reasons," she echoed.

"If you refuse to answer me, I shall simply take the train."

"No, Gordon. I won't have you go away like that. Come here and let us talk it over sensibly."

"I don't care to talk it over sensibly. We have had too confounded much sense already."

"Sit down here beside me."

"Thanks. I am able to stand."

"What I have to say to you I don't wish to shout."

"It won't be necessary. I am exactly five feet away from you. I am an accurate judge of distances."

"Do you practise on your friends?"

"Yes. That's the way I keep them."

"I wish you would sit down. You make me feel as if I were playing up to a dummy, the way we used to do at the Conservatoire."

"The dummy system is excellent. I wish it were in vogue generally."

"Then stand where you are, and I will scream at you."

"It's not necessary. I have my hearing."

"Then, to begin with, as you say, you entirely misunderstand my relations with Geoffrey. We have been good friends for years, now; and if we are anything more, I have yet to hear of it. We sang together in Berlin in the old days, when we had minor parts and both of us were fighting for our places. That always makes people dear to you, in a way, no matter how jealous of them you may be for other reasons. Why, once I even loved a contralto that way. Then Geoffrey and I spent a hot, dusty Summer together in Paris once, studying with Lampertore, and the billingsgate we both got from the old man every day was another bond of sympathy. If Geoffrey chooses to presume on all this, I can't help myself, I suppose.

But that is no reason why you should go into spasms of loyalty.

"I confess I have been a bit cordial with you on a week's acquaintance, but you have no idea how hard it is to adjust yourself to the laity after the profession. You can't understand how playing into one another's hands night after night and season after season takes all the seriousness out of things which people ordinarily regard as sacred; I mean caresses, to be frank. We learn to caress at the Conservatoire. It is our business to know how. Tenderness, this; endearment, this; yearning, this; passion, this." Her face and postures flashed sheet lightnings of emotion to suit the moods. "We know how so well that all our old ones grow conventionalized. I am constantly on the watch for an expressive gesture. You have a great many of them, though you don't know it. I have to be finding new ones. Why, I have a row with the stage manager regularly at the opening of every season because I won't clutch my heart in the good old-fashioned way.

"However, you see my point. We get used to saying what we mean. I dare say I have startled you several times during the past week."

"You have!" admitted Knowlton fervently.

"Well, there you are. And I was especially careful, too, because I saw from the start that you would be the sort which is critical without being fastidious. The other day it popped into my head that you were just like Siegfried, bold, modest, childlike, and capable of anything heroic, and the next minute I had said it. You were partly bored and partly disgusted. I had simply said what I meant. Do I make myself clear?"

"Blindly."

"You think I am amusing myself with you?"

"I think I am the subject of some kind of joke, if that is what you mean."

"Well, you are not, if that is any comfort. I never was more in earnest but once in my life, and that was when I decided to break into grand opera.

But you and I have been talking at cross-purposes for a whole week, and it begins to look as if the curtain were going to be rung down without either of us having known what parts were assigned us. You have the reserve which always piques the curiosity of women. Our men lack it. I suppose it is the result of academic training. On the other hand, I have availed myself of the freemasonry which exists among artists. But I am going to talk to you now as to one of the profession.

"You were the first person I saw on the pier the day we arrived, and the pier was crowded. I had made up my mind to know you in the instant before I discovered that you were the friend Geoffrey was coming here to meet. You have a look which fascinates women. You seem to be looking at them much harder than you really are. You don't know this because you don't notice them very closely, but they do you, two and three times. Why, yes, you do know it, too. The second day we were here you noticed someone staring at you and asked Geoffrey if your face was smudged. Don't you remember how Geoffrey laughed, and how you thought your face was smudged? Well, in the course of the season, we have to be civil to so many bores that we earn the right to take the bits in our teeth when we see someone who really does interest us. I did meet you and you know the rest."

"Is that all?" asked Knowlton, who had listened much as one sits on the seat in a runaway and calculates the chances of a jump.

"Why, no. There is more. But I think this will do," she replied.

"Then will you answer my original question?" he demanded inexorably. "Am I to go or to stay?"

She looked at him in blank frustration with an angry color mounting to her cheek.

"And has all I have said slid off your back like that?"

"I am not aware of any drenching," he responded stiffly.

She turned away from him suddenly



and walked over to the edge of the cliff, where she stood looking down into the water which washed against the smooth wall with a soft, woolly sound. Knowlton heard her say miserably:

"You are very unkind."

He could resist the prima donna, but he found the woman more formidable.

"I am truly sorry if what I have said has hurt you," he said earnestly. "Perhaps we have been overdoing our frankness a little. But don't you make it hard for yourself?"

This brought no reply from her. She stood rigidly where she was in the waning light, and seemed to watch his face for some sign of relenting. None came. He returned her stare rather stolidly, and vaguely wondered what was coming next. Then, as she turned as if to leave him, he saw her stumble on the uneven footing of the ledge. She reeled for an instant, fighting for a balance, then flashed over the edge with a shriek.

The splash of her fall was quickly followed by another, and Knowlton caught her only a few feet beneath the surface. He brought her up, and was soon oaring with his free arm toward a strip of beach some dozen yards below the cliffs. With the help of the tide he reached footing on firm sand without much exertion, and carried her up the beach. But as he worked over her she regained consciousness more as a person coming out of a swoon than as a victim of the water. In a few minutes more she was able to stand and he helped her up the rocks, where, wrapping his coat about her, he started a fire of driftwood.

"It will be better for you to get warm a little before we start back," he explained.

She submitted in a dull languor, but her large eyes followed his movements with a kind of thirst, as he brought sticks and barrels to heap on the flame. Last of all, he came and sat down beside her.

"Do you feel chilled?" he asked gently.

"No," she murmured.

"Are you too weak to walk? The fire will last while I go for help."

"No, no," she said with some haste.

"Stay here. I shall be able to walk in a few minutes."

The green and yellow tints had faded out of the West, and up from the levels of the sea the shadows came pouring in. The water lapped the great knees of the rocks with a low, thick sound, like the voice of a person speaking in sleep, and the blaze roared and crackled. Its light made a little ruddy circle in the gloom, a heart of fire in a black universe. They sat together between the two immensities of sea and sky. Above was nothing, below was nothing, around was nothing; they two were alone, and the rest of humanity was nowhere.

"It is the magic fire," she murmured, "and you are Siegfried."

The heat of the flame had made her drowsy. Her head fell wearily against his shoulder and rested there.

A moment later he stirred softly, and pressed her cheek to his.

She moved to release herself.

"Why not?" he asked in a whisper.

"Because when you come to yourself you will blame me," she answered, a shade bitterly.

"I have only just come to myself, and I blame nobody but myself that I didn't come sooner."

She sat up and looked at him sharply.

"Do you mean what you are saying?" she demanded.

"Yes."

There was a cry exactly like that which she gave as she fell over the cliff, and she sank into his arms, but instead of holding her to him he drew back and leaped to his feet. She saved herself by putting out a hand on the bare rock, and so, propped on one arm, sat looking up at him in bewilderment.

"Wait!" he cried. "Two days ago you said that it would be impossible for you to look me square in the eye and say what was not true. I am going to try you. When you fell over the rocks a little while ago you made a sound

exactly like the Valkyrie cry. It didn't occur to me then, but just now you repeated it. It strikes me that one shriek doesn't do duty for all occasions, unless you know one which won't injure your voice. That shriek of yours was *operatic*. Now look at me without flinching and answer one question: *Can you swim?*"

His look fastened hers, and she seemed unable to avoid it. Her lips moved once before any sound came; then, in a whisper, she answered:

"Yes."

"I thought so. Pah!" He turned away with a shudder of disgust.

She shook herself together, and stood up defiantly.

Knowlton regarded her with a smile which was too good-humored to be sarcastic.

"And so," he remarked, "the last act of our Wagnerian cycle is farce comedy, and the magic fire is a blazing rum barrel, thrown overboard by a Gloucester fishing-smack. Come, let's go back to the village and get into some dry clothes."



## HIS CONSERVATIVE COURSE

"FOR a number of years," said the Old Codger, in his customary acrid-ruminating way, "I kept a volume that I called my Book of Suggestions, in which I jotted down from time to time the advice given me by relatives, friends, enemies, casual acquaintances, total strangers, innocent bystanders, and sundry others, most of it tendered in good faith and all solemnity and earnestness, without solicitation and on pretty nearly every conceivable subject 'neath the sun and in the waters under the earth, and nearly every one of the different items contradictory to all the others bearing on the same point.

"After carefully totaling up my plunder I was amazed to find that if I had followed the advice so kindly given me I'd have been in the poor-house a score of times, in prison on a dozen different charges, narrowly escaped the Legislature twice, lost the respect of all sensible people too often to mention, and gone to the grave at least nineteen separate and distinct times, in certain instances in several pieces, to say nothing of being in the hole in sundry oil wells, infesting various lunatic asylums, and being pruned and amputated in an assortment of ways. I should also have lost my hair several times over, if it were possible, and my self-respect quite as frequently, removed to about every locality on the map, built a house on a turn-table so it could face just the way everybody thought it ought to face, ruined my digestion and my reputation, lost my health, violated every rule of common sense, and very likely wound up by grafting on a tail and running wild with the cattle.

"But, fortunately, I never paid any attention to the suggestions given me further than to jot each bit down in my book with every appearance of profound credulity and without the slightest intention of following it—I'd just open the back door of the hearse, slide the item in, and gently close the door. And so the feelings of my fellow-men were never hurt and I was not put in the slightest jeopardy by their kindness."

TOM P. MORGAN.

## THE LITTLE PAINTER

By Wilmot Price

THE theatre sparkled with a thousand gem-like lights. They pointed luminous fingers at the rival jewels poised like dazzling fire-flies here and there on the shoulders and heads of the gaily-dressed women assembled to hail the opening of the opera season.

A few rows from the front were seated two young men between whom there was a close bond of intimacy, judging from the flowing stream of conversation in which both seemed swimming.

"This is a fearfully tantalizing glimpse of you," the taller of the two men was saying while the violins were clearing their throats for the overture. "After three years in Paris it does seem as if you might stay in New York longer than a week, yet here you go flying off to California tomorrow in search of some specific for overwrought nerves."

"The Pacific is to be my only specific," the younger man replied, smiling. "Atmosphere, hygienically and artistically speaking, will be a welcome substitute for the smoke-laden air of New York. I shall establish my mother in Santa Barbara, take a brief holiday myself, and then return to New York and paint, paint, paint."

"The portrait of that French deputy that was exhibited here last year was perfectly ripping," his friend whispered enthusiastically as the curtain went up on the first act of "Siegfried."

Arthur Gorham had the indefinable something which—as surely as the subtle aroma of iodoform surrounding him—proclaims a man to be a doctor. He was tall, large of frame and strong

in build. His face was serious, concentrated and thoughtful, with broad brow and square chin. His companion, Robert Stanton, was pale and slight, with delicate-looking shoulders which seemed perpetually bent over an invisible easel—for though he bore none of the outward marks of the painter—his hair showing signs of a recent visit to the barber—he yet had the look of the artist, of the nervous, sensitive receiver of subtle impressions, the creator of beautiful images. His clear-cut features might have been those of an imaginative woman. No beard or mustache broke the curve of the short upper lip and smooth, well-modeled chin. His eyes were quick, eager, passionate and afraid, like those of some gentle wild animal. The virile type of man and the strenuous type of woman have united in scoring him as effeminate, but those who viewed him with the inward eye discerned in him a sensitive beauty often found in that heaven-endowed mortal in whom are mingled the spiritual and mental attributes of both man and woman—the artist.

The music clashed and clanged, its magnificent dissonances exciting hidden currents of blood in the well-cared-for bodies of a jaded public which deluded itself into a belief that a love of sensuous emotion was synonymous with enjoyment of music. And so one scene followed another, and act succeeded act. Robert Stanton could give only part of his attention to the opera. He was exhausted, physically and nervously, and every vein and fiber throbbed with excitability and the fatigue that cannot rest.

He was overworked and worried, and craved a few months' perfect inanition and quiet after three years' labor into which he had put all he had in him of vitality and strength. A strange torpor and sense of unreality possessed him. He closed his eyes, and tried, by an effort of will, to bring himself back to the life around him. The unreal scene taking place on the stage seemed to Stanton like some manifestation of his own excited imagination—till all in a moment the flames that surrounded the sleeping Brünnhilde spread to the inflammable scenery, caught a projecting limb of a papery tree and waved like a flag of warning across the upper part of the stage. A low roar of horror came up from the audience, accentuated by a few shrill, hysterical shrieks. The conductor of the orchestra sprang to the stage and waved his hand commandingly toward the multitude.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" he screamed in broken English. "Remember that you *are* ladies and gentlemen and not cattle seeking your own safety. There is no danger. *Sit down!*" In a voice shrill with desperation, "I command you, sit down!"

To Robert Stanton's crazed vision the heroic little conductor seemed a grotesque sprite gesticulating wildly against the background of flame—no more a real person than the mythical figures hurrying frantically hither and thither behind him. The horrible yellow tongues licked up all that could be devoured on the stage and hungrily reached for the drop-curtain, hanging high above, caught it with a triumphant burst of stifling smoke, crept down the woodwork on each side of the stage, and flung themselves out across the footlights. Then came the kind of stampede which shows human nature at its most primitive pitch. No hell of the imagination could equal the infernal scene presented by this riot of death and life. Human bodies from which the souls seemed to have taken flight fought together with the desperation of wild beasts. The magnificent exceptions were lost in the general battle for

self. Robert Stanton, his face distorted with the inhumanity of madness, fought his way toward the nearest exit, trampling on women, pushing aside larger men with a sudden access of unnatural strength. His manhood had left him. He was simply an untamed animal struggling for freedom, a crazy creature fighting for his own life. He felt that he was in a dream, a terrible, unspeakable nightmare from which he should presently awake—but while he was dreaming he must fight, fight. What mattered it that the unreal figures in his terrible vision were crushed and beaten by his maddened fists? He heard the shrieks of agony, the cries of terror, the groans of death, even the hideous laughs of hysteria, and he said to himself, "Am I insane? Is this a madhouse, or is it only a dream?"

Ahead he saw the entrance to freedom, a door blocked by living and dying humanity struggling for air, fighting for life. A tall girl was thrown violently against Stanton. Her arm was clasped like an iron band around the waist of a shorter woman. She made no effort to resist the blows, the buffets and wild pushings, but only to ward them off as much as possible from her companion. She was in Stanton's way. He took her by the shoulders and cruelly forced her back, wedging himself in the place where she had stood. She made no resistance, but looked in his frightened eyes with eyes which showed no trace of fear, no tinge even of excitement. But in no human features had Robert Stanton ever seen an expression of such high contempt. He "too late, under her solemn fillet saw the scorn." He knew that he should be haunted by her face all his life. He knew also—suddenly—as a blind man to whom sight has been restored, that he was not in a dream and that he was not crazy. He was simply a coward—a brutal, sneaking coward trying to crawl to safety over the prostrate forms of women he had struck down. He tried to turn—to undo some of the harm he had done. He tried to find again the pale face

whose scorn had wakened him from his trance. He would save this one woman at least, even if he perished in doing it, for the soul had come back into his brutish body. But the ironical Fates would not accept his offering of tardy remorse. Against his will he was borne with the current of shrieking, suffocating humanity out into the world of the living.

Ambulances, carriages, carts, stretchers with their maimed and mutilated burdens were drawn up in horrid confusion near the scene of terror, while doctors, firemen, policemen and stray passers-by forgot the primitive instinct of self-preservation in the larger instinct of self-sacrifice. By the white glare of the electric light Robert Stanton caught a glimpse of his friend Gorham, with coat torn from his back, his shirt charred and burned, carrying wounded victims to places of safety, his face composed and pale, a splendid sanity controlling his quick and quiet actions. Stanton covered his face with his hands and groaned aloud. As he fled from the scene of his disgrace he looked like one pursued by the furies, and his tortured conscience shrieked after him, "Shame! Shame! Coward! Coward! Coward!"

It was a Winter morning two years later. A stout, handsome woman got out of the elevator on the fifteenth flight of one of the tall buildings in New York and knocked at a door to which was attached a visiting-card bearing the name of Mr. Robert Stanton. The young painter opened the door himself and stood before his visitor bowing apologetically and bristling with paint brushes like a fretful porcupine. His mouth and chin were hidden by a short mustache and beard, which, however, changed him less than the expression of cynical sadness which had crept into his eyes and altered the lines of his face.

"Why do you painter people always insist on living among the stars!" his visitor panted, returning his embarrassed greeting by an informal series of nods. "I always feel as if I were a

piece of money being shot through one of those dreadful tubes in a department store when I come up in an express elevator."

Robert Stanton pushed a chair forward with a reluctant smile. "Don't bother to talk till you get your breath," he advised.

"My dear young man, it is never a bother for me to talk," his genial guest continued. "As you may imagine, I am here on business, not pleasure—but," she interrupted herself suddenly, "it certainly is a pleasure to see a portrait like that" (pointing to a half-finished sketch on his easel). "It's General Warden's own self."

"I'm glad you like it," Stanton murmured grudgingly.

"What I am here for is to get you to paint my niece's portrait. Since seeing your exhibition last week I am confident that you are the person to do it. Perhaps you may have seen her—she is Miss Agnes Maynard—twenty-five years old—and I am her aunt with whom she lives, Miss Maynard senior."

The young man bowed again. "No, I have never seen Miss Maynard. I have been away from New York for five years. A new generation has grown up during my absence."

"My niece is considered very handsome," Miss Maynard went on, "but painters are so erratic you never know whom they will admire. She hasn't red hair, neither has she a long neck with a joint in it, and she doesn't wear dirty green liberty silk dresses and sit yearning against a gilt Japanese screen."

Robert Stanton gave his short, mirthless laugh. "All that is in her favor, certainly," he said.

"She has ordinary brown hair, and an uncommonly good nose, and intelligent gray-green eyes."

Miss Maynard continued to catalogue her niece's charms till Stanton declared he could almost paint her without seeing her. At last it was arranged that he should come to dinner the next night, meet Miss Maynard, discuss costumes and arrange about



sittings. After a little more chat the friendly visitor rose, Stanton walked with her to the elevator, and she abruptly dropped from view with a humorous gasp of sudden farewell. The young man returned to his studio, but he did not at once continue the painting his caller had interrupted.

Stanton had returned from Southern California to New York a month before, after two years of inward dull wretchedness and outward brilliant accomplishment. The terrible experience of that unforgettable night in the theatre had left him a different man. For a time the acuteness of his suffering had threatened his reason. He did not breathe a word, even to his mother, concerning the tragedy of his own self-revelation, but his trial by fire was enough to account for the temporary shaking of his ill-balanced nerves. Slowly his condition of poignant pain gave place to a dull depression of spirit which threatened to become chronic. In vain he sought opportunities for courage, for a chance to prove to himself that it was not his true ego which had crept forth on that fateful night from the mysterious caves of personal identity. A thousand times he told himself that if he had had a moment's preparation he could have controlled the spirit of fear that had ruled his body. He was by impulse physically a coward—that was acknowledged, but some day he might prove himself to possess germs of moral heroism. This was the one hope that saved his sanity. His only refuge from racking thought lay in work, and he painted desperately and wonderfully. His talent blossomed under the strangely beneficent influence of acute personal suffering. Day and night he was haunted by the face of the girl whose look of scorn had seemed to epitomize for him the contempt of a whole world. Till he could forget the face he could not forget his own infamy.

On his return to New York Stanton had had an exhibition of his paintings, with the result that he was hailed by prospective purchasers, rival artists and captious critics as a man of genius.

Many of his old friends had either left New York or were hurrying through business thoroughfares never crossed by paths leading to the pursuit of the impetuous arts. Arthur Gorham alone, by the alchemy of a science that is also an art, kept up his interest in books, music and painting, counting among his warmest friends the little artist whom some of his surgical brethren regarded merely as a pathological specimen.

When Robert Stanton found himself entering Miss Maynard's apartment the evening after her call a strange nervousness possessed him. It was so long since he had mingled socially with his kind that an unmasculine access of shyness sent the color to his cheeks. But when he saw his hostess approaching the blood suddenly rushed back to his heart, leaving him white with the pallor of one who has confronted a specter—for behind Miss Maynard's generous figure he saw the face that had haunted him for the last two years.

Agnes Maynard came forward with extended hand, tall, stately, graceful. Her eyes looked, not at him, but into him—just as they had done before—only now there was no scorn in their friendly gaze, nor in the delicately arched brows that gave such distinction to the clear whiteness of her skin. She bent her head very slightly, as though to bring her intent eyes more nearly on a level with the haunted eyes of the young man staring helplessly at her; then in a low, agreeable voice she said, smiling, without waiting for her aunt's introduction, "I am your victim."

The words were ominous, and the young man started involuntarily. His victim indeed she was! He remembered how his cruel hands had gripped her slender shoulders, how he had driven her back into the hell from which she strove to escape, and he wondered that his guilty face did not reveal him as her dastardly assailant. But evidently no spark of recognition had flashed into her consciousness, as indeed, why should it? He did not need the disguise of beard and mus-

tache to drive from her thoughts the memory of a coward's face. His outward semblance she had probably forgotten as soon as it was seen, only his craven soul she would never forget.

As the little painter gazed stupidly at her beautiful, responsive face he became conscious of the inevitable approach of an unavoidable fate. He knew with the certainty of a divinely endowed seer that Destiny ordained that he should love with the whole strength of his unawakened nature this woman whom he had sought to destroy.

Again the sense of unreality possessed him, but he played his part in the dream-world well. He talked and laughed, listened and assented as the moment's need suggested. He passed judgment on Miss Maynard's wardrobe and selected a creamy white crêpe with soft yellow shadows and depths as the gown in which he wished to paint her, and it was arranged that he should come to the apartment every morning at eleven till a good start was made. Before the evening was over he felt that his friendship with both his hostesses had roots in the remote past. The young woman was full of interest in everything pertaining to the arts, and had known many of Stanton's friends who had been studying at the Beaux-Arts while he was in Paris. She talked intelligently and well, with none of the pedantry and reiteration of stock phrases by which the modern girl endeavors to prove her cleverness. She was frank, straightforward, amusing, full of enthusiasm and life, radiating health and hope, and suggesting the power to win and to give affection of no ordinary kind. When Stanton took her hand at parting his look was that of a trusting dog, who with speechless eloquence pleads for words of understanding from a higher order of being. He would have liked to fling himself at her feet, to kiss her skirt-binding, to beg her to expose herself to some danger from which he might rescue her, and in so doing gloriously close his own life. But he only said "Good night, Miss Maynard," while her kind eyes regarded him with half-quizzical interest.

It was not many days before Stanton found that he lived only in the hours spent with Agnes Maynard. The nice aunt, being an unconventional lady, left the young people alone together for long, happy stretches of time, during which the painter worshiped his sitter and was tortured by the consciousness of a love that must always be hopeless and silent. It was the crown of his remorse, his agony, his shame and his glory. As he worked, the face of the girl in the theatre got between himself and his subject, and he could not keep a look of scorn from settling on the painted brow and lips which his brush touched with so delicate a reverence. The girl's head in the picture was a little thrown back, her brows lifted ever so slightly and her straightforward look of illuminated understanding was just tinged with the loftiness of pity. Once, in a five minutes' recess from sitting and looking beautiful, Agnes took a peep at her counterfeit presentment. As she stood behind Stanton she gave an exclamation of mingled surprise and pleasure. "It's ever so much better looking than I am," she commented, "but why under the sun did you make me look so superior, as if everyone but myself was a worm?"

"I think that is the way you would look at a man you despised," he answered very low. "It is the way I always see you."

"But I have never despised anyone!" she exclaimed.

"Have you not?" he asked earnestly.

"Yes, once." She turned her fearless gaze full upon him. "I was once in a burning theatre, and a man—a gentleman," her lips curled involuntarily—"tried to save himself by pushing me behind him and taking my place."

"Don't tell me about him!" Stanton cried fiercely. "Some day I shall kill that man!"

She looked at his handsome, eager face lit up by passion, and she flushed with surprise. "Ah, you despise a coward as much as I do," she said simply, and returned to her pose.

Stanton was so swayed by the power of his love that he could hardly keep himself from painting out one day what he had painted in the day before, in order to prolong an intercourse the end to which seemed like death. He despised himself so utterly that it never entered his mind that his sitter might see in him an uncommonly handsome and appealing young man of genius whose love for herself was revealed in every word and look, and so he tortured himself with the hopelessness of his love. Agnes Maynard's aunt inspected the portrait before the last touches were to be added, and expressed herself as entirely delighted with the result. "That look of scorn seems to make the goddess human," she maintained. "Agnes looked just like that the other day when an intoxicated cook asked her for a reference."

The day of the last sitting came and both Robert and Agnes looked strained and apprehensive. They both were conscious that the hour marked an epoch—a change in a daily intercourse which to both of them had been a rare delight. At last the painter flung down his brush with a smothered exclamation of "Finished!" and rose abruptly. He walked over to where Agnes was sitting and stood in front of her, his face so pale and quivering that she impulsively put out a reassuring hand toward him.

"Listen to me," he said, "I have got to speak or I'll go mad. I've got to tell the truth, then I'll go away and I promise never to trouble you again." His breath came quickly, as if he had been running. For an instant he looked at the girl seated motionless before him, and his eyes implored her pity, then he turned them away that he might not see her scorn.

"It was I that pushed you back that night in the burning theatre," he whispered hoarsely. "I have never told a human being, but I must tell you now. The knowledge of it is killing me. I have no excuse. I wasn't insane—I was just—a coward. And I have done worse than that. I have dared to love you." His appealing

eyes, like those of some enchanted creature, looked at her with the hopelessness of utter despair. "You can't think worse of me than I do of myself. You need never see me again. But I had to tell you that I love you. I had to tell you that I once would have killed you in order to save myself. I had to tell you that I am a coward."

A low laugh—full of sympathy, full of affection, broke from her. She rose suddenly and held out her hands. "I knew it was you all the time," she said, her voice vibrating between tears and laughter. "You had been pointed out to me that dreadful night as Robert Stanton, the painter. Oh, I *did* so hope that you'd tell me! And you did! All yourself, with no leading on! You dear little thing, you were insane that night, don't you suppose I know that?" Her voice had the cadence of a mother's soothing a child. "Why, you are not a coward, you are a perfect little hero to tell me what you have told me just now! I am immensely proud of your love—I hope you will be a little proud of mine!"

People talk of the blindness of love, but there is no emotion more conducive to clear-sightedness. Amid all the rapture and the amazement into which Stanton was thrown by Agnes's generous words a shaft of understanding pierced his heart, and even while the hands he worshiped were resting on his shoulders he felt with a stab of intuition that her love was made up of sympathetic friendship, of maternal tenderness, and more than all else of a great unconscious pity almost divine.

Their engagement followed so soon on their first meeting that Agnes's aunt declared that they knew no more of each other than did Romeo and Juliet. "And we all know that it is very fortunate they never settled down into plain Mr. and Mrs. Montague," she added with some severity. But she liked Robert Stanton, although she confessed to herself that if he had been a little larger she would have been still more proud to introduce him to curious friends as her niece's future husband. "But his brow and eyes and his un-

doubted genius are more unusual than mere brute size," she said in consolation.

As for Robert Stanton himself, he seemed to be living in a new element and breathing a new atmosphere. His adoration of the girl who had promised to marry him was almost a religion to him. There were only two thorns on the blossom of his perfect happiness. One was his mother's absence, the other was the ever-present canker of shame and remorse which still gnawed insatiably at his heart.

Arthur Gorham was the one friend to whom Stanton could pour out his unstinted praises of the impossible She. Gorham had been taken to inspect Agnes as soon as the engagement was announced, and it was easy to see that their mutual liking was not a mere perfunctory emotion resulting from their common appreciation of Stanton. Both being young, enthusiastic, genuine, and interested in many of the same things, a friendly relation was instantly established between them, and the little painter took the heartiest satisfaction in the frank approval each called forth from the other. "Oh, if only I looked like Arthur!" he sighed one evening after Dr. Gorham had uncoiled his lazy length from an arm-chair and reluctantly left the fiancés together. "It seems to me that mere size is a substitute for all the virtues—and Arthur has both size and virtues. You ought to be marrying *him*, Agnes. There is something artistically wrong in your linking your lot with mine. It shouldn't be allowed."

He smiled up at her adoringly, and she patted his shoulder with the affectionate good-comradeship which was her substitute for more sentimental demonstrations. "How I wish I knew your mother!" she exclaimed for the hundredth time since their engagement. "You must be like her, and I'm sure I should be fond of her."

"Indeed you would," he sighed. "But you know how delicate she is, and New York at this season always gives her bronchitis. However, it is good to know that she will come on for the

wedding next Summer." Agnes nodded, gave an impersonal little smile and changed the subject.

It was about a month after this that Robert received a note from his mother's maid, saying that Mrs. Stanton had developed tuberculosis in a very acute form, and that if he wished to see her again he must leave New York for Santa Barbara at once. A letter from her doctor contained the same alarming intelligence, and Robert waited only to pay a hurried farewell to Agnes, speak for five minutes with Arthur Gorham, throw some necessities into a trunk and start for the West at once. Till he had met Agnes his mother had been the controlling influence of his life, and the bond between them was of more than common strength. The shock of the news he had just received seemed to tear his old life from the new, and his whole heart went out toward his oldest and most tried friend. If it were not for the sense of security which the thought of Agnes gave him he could have fancied himself going to pieces, mentally and physically.

In the brief interview with Dr. Gorham Stanton had made him promise, rather reluctantly, to go to see Agnes every day while he was absent—to cheer her up, take her to the theatre and do what he could to make her forget her anomalous position of the deserted betrothed.

"Look here, Bob, don't make me promise," Arthur Gorham at first boyishly pleaded. "I'll go to see Miss Maynard as often as I can, and I'll do anything she wants me to do with her—but confound it, old man, she's too attractive to throw in my way like this. I may forget she's engaged to you." He laughed nervously, but Stanton would not be gainsaid.

"Forget anything you like, only help her to forget that I'm away," he begged. "I want her to be happy. Nothing else under heaven matters—except my mother," he added brokenly.

Gorham grasped his hand. "I'll promise to go and see your lady-love every day you're away, if I possibly



can," he assured him. "Good-bye, old man. You know how much I hope there's a wrong diagnosis in your mother's case."

The diagnosis was not wrong, but Mrs. Stanton lingered for three weeks after her son's arrival. Her suffering was not too keen for her to take great comfort and pleasure from Robert's presence, and time seemed to slip back twenty years and transform the man into the child. Her sympathy with her son, her interest in all that concerned him was as keen and living as ever, and she never alluded to the separation which both silently felt to be drawing near. She talked to him much of Agnes and of what their life together was likely to be. As for him, he felt that the weeks now passing would always be one of the precious memories of his life. One evening he felt an irresistible desire to confide to her the secret of his cowardice. It loomed like a visible barrier between them, and he knew that the years ahead would be haunted by the knowledge that the last weeks of perfect unity were marred by the concealment of a vital fact. So, sitting beside her couch at sunset, with his hot hand resting on her cool one, he quickly and brokenly told her the incident of his degradation. She took it even more seriously than he had expected, not so much in blame for what she evidently felt to have been a fit of temporary insanity, as for its effect on the future relations between himself and Agnes.

"I wish I could feel that the whole dreadful incident is closed," she said sadly. "I don't doubt that Agnes will never voluntarily think of it again, but, Robert dear, a difficult task lies ahead of you two young people—to rise above the consciousness of a weakness like yours. For, dearest boy, the dreadful truth is that you once would have caused her death to save your own life, and to live that pitiful memory down will test you both to the utmost."

Robert bowed his head in agony. "I know, I know," he groaned. "When I told her I thought I should cease

to be haunted by my shame—but it is even worse now that she knows. She is all kindness. She has made me promise never to speak of the dreadful thing to her again—she has promised to forget it herself—but there it is—a ghost that we both see, though we pretend not to."

"Robert," his mother's voice trembled with the strength of her emotion and the weakness of her bodily condition. "Robert, the time may yet come when you can redeem your disgrace. Your will is now fortified by consciousness of its past weakness. An opportunity is sure to come sometime in your life for moral heroism, a chance for you to prove that though you have been a coward by impulse you can be a hero by determination. I cannot see into your future—I do not know when the time for quick, brave action will come, but it will come, and I pray for you to find strength when you need it. Then only will you find peace."

His mother's exhortation seemed to Robert like the voice from another world. He was profoundly moved—deeply thankful that he had spoken to her, and when her death came, a few days later, the young man felt that something of his mother's fortitude and faith had entered his own soul.

After Mrs. Stanton's death Robert returned to New York. It seemed both to Gorham and to Agnes that he had gained a new dignity, a new poise and a new self-respect, which seemed almost to increase his bodily stature. Grief, instead of weakening, had strengthened him—and it gave the clearness of truth to his inward vision. He also felt that a change had come over Agnes during his absence. She was no less friendly, no less affectionate and eager to please—indeed an added gentleness and thoughtfulness seemed to animate her every word and act, but he was conscious of effort. He felt that conscience rather than impulse guided the unflinching kindness of her attitude toward him. His love for her was so supreme that it seemed to catch a momentary spark of omniscience. Suddenly the truth was revealed to him with the quick certainty



of a lightning flash, that Agnes now knew what he had always dimly felt—that her affection for him was not love. The knowledge stunned him—he only wished that it might kill. He knew her well enough to be sure that she would fulfil her promise, not merely to the letter but in the spirit, that her sense of honor was as definite as a man's, and that she would not take her freedom even if he could nerve himself to offer it to her. She would be not merely a good and faithful wife, but a devoted and sympathetic one. Her heart was as generous as her sense of honor was acute, and her pride would not let her falter.

The change that he had also detected in Gorham convinced him of the truth—and for that truth he knew that none but himself was responsible. Arthur looked worn and tired. He was moody, nervous, and unlike himself. He shunned Agnes and avoided his old confidential talks with Robert. He wrapped himself in his profession and refused to do more than peep gloomily forth from it, instead of gleefully flinging it aside for an hour's sociable chat with a friend, as he had formerly loved to do. Suddenly Robert understood, and he understood also that the hour of his real temptation had come. He felt with awful clearness the truth of what his mother had told him—that his act of cowardice in the past would be the hardest possible test of the future relations between himself and Agnes—that it was a deed the effect of which would last for all time. Yet he knew that because of that very act the woman he worshiped would never voluntarily give him up. But now there was an even more potent impediment to their true marriage.

The evening that the revelation blinded him he went to Agnes and stood in front of her, white and pathetic, like a brave little ghost. "Agnes, I ask for the truth, both for your sake and mine. Do you care more for some other man than you do for me?" She put out her hand as if to push away the question.

"You have no right to ask me,

Robert," she said proudly. "You know that I'm very fond of you, and I believe we shall be happy together. I shall certainly do my best to make you forget all that it hurts you to remember." Her eyes fell before his agonized look into her soul. He smiled tremulously.

"Thanks, Agnes, you're a perfect brick," he said emphatically, and changed the subject. That night on his way home he looked in for a moment to see Gorham. Stanton stood in the door of the room where the doctor sat in front of the fire, but he refused to take off his overcoat or sit down. "No, I just came to ask you a question," he explained.

"Not professional, I hope?" the doctor queried, with a smile.

"No, purely impertinent," his friend replied.

"And what is it?" Dr. Gorham asked with unaccustomed nervousness.

"I just want to ask whether you are in love with Agnes," Stanton suddenly inquired, standing so close to his friend that not a shade of expression could pass over the doctor's face without being detected.

Gorham started and bit his lip angrily. "You haven't the least right to put such a question as that to me," he began impetuously, but Stanton interrupted him. "I know I haven't, old man; you needn't answer it. I'm going now; good night," he said, and walked rapidly out of the room.

The old feeling of being an actor in a dream possessed him—but it seemed to be his mother's dream, not his own, and in that vision he must play his part as she would have dreamed that it was written. He went back to his rooms, picked up pen and paper and rapidly wrote:

DEAR AGNES:

YOU KNOW I'm fearfully erratic—you must have found that out. I suppose painters and actors and queer freaks who deal with the arts are made differently from other people. Anyway I'm different. I'm an awful coward, as you know, and—how shall I say it?—well, I want to break our engagement. I am not brave enough to say so to your face, so I am saying it behind your back. I suppose I am jilting you—it's

an ugly word—but you can save your pride by giving out that you broke the engagement, and I won't contradict you. I am sailing for France tomorrow, and shall go straight to Paris. My whole heart is in painting, and you are much too rare a creature to have to put up with a divided allegiance. I don't expect you to forgive me, but perhaps you'll be kind enough to forget me, and that will do as well. You see I'm a cad as well as a coward.

Yours sincerely,  
ROBERT STANTON.

Then he scribbled a line to Gorham.

Please go to see Agnes tomorrow. She'll show you a letter from me. You'll probably diagnose me as crazy. Perhaps I am.

ROBERT.

The next afternoon Dr. Gorham hastened to see Agnes and show her the enigmatic note he had received that morning. The girl's eyes were swollen with crying, yet a strange elation seemed to lift her spirit. Robert Stanton's letter was tucked in her belt,

and after glancing at his scrawl to Arthur she pulled out her own letter and handed it to him. She watched him intently as he read it. When he had finished his lips tightened and he crushed the paper in his clenched hand.

"The coward!" he cried, with blazing eyes—but her eyes flashed with a more divine fire.

"Oh, *can't* you understand?" she cried with instinctive disappointment. "He is not a coward; he is the bravest man I have ever known."

She faced him defiantly, but when she met his gaze and saw understanding slowly drive out anger from his eyes the defiance faded from her look. Then at last Robert Stanton would have been content with himself—could he have seen the peace and happiness shining in Agnes's radiant face.



## VIGIL

By Ludwig Lewisohn

ALL day there was no motion in the skies,  
All day there was no music save of rain;  
All day no words were uttered but in vain,  
All day my heart was still and blind mine eyes.  
And I was silent like to one who lies  
In the eternal slumber, but my brain  
Rang with vexed sighing of an unseen main  
On which dim storms continually rise.

Then the night came, and with it my long watch  
Was ended, on my hand a white hand's touch  
Lingered; a cheek pressed my cheek softly. Lo!  
The veil was from Love's lyric face withdrawn,  
And like a fiery lily all aglow  
Bloomed out of midnight a miraculous dawn.

## THE LEAN FLAME

By Mary Glascock

THE Summer wind blew the long heavy veil in sphinx-like, rigid folds about Joan Gale's face, the dead-black of the stuff setting in relief her firm features.

Little lines crinkling about the corners of her eyes deepened the pre-occupied intensity of their expression. She took a card with a penciled address, and carefully read it over while she turned down the hill—the hill at the bottom of which a sapphire bay showed white sails that danced and dipped to the breeze.

These details were a joy to her even in her harried state of mind, and she took time to know them, waiting at the door of a high, narrow building.

Across the water soft brown velvet hills stretched down the blue of the North, visible emblems of far peace; straightening her veil, she involuntarily sighed as she was ushered into the small apartment where Betty Carston lived.

Keen of perception, Joan Gale looked quickly about her, to read the occupant by the atmosphere she had created in her home. The charming simplicity of the room pleased her, rested her, and she leaned back in a chair with closed eyes.

"I'm so glad you've come," a shy voice greeted, and a young girl's honest eyes smiled into hers. "I expected to come to you today. Stanly said we were to go." Red color stained the olive of the girl's cheeks. "Let me get a pillow for your back. Please sit by the window; it's our one view. You can look past the Fort—father says it's an anodyne for unrest. The hill was steep, wasn't it?"

"I don't mind hills. It is good to have such a very plump, piny pillow to lean against." Mrs. Gale changed to the proffered seat, and smiled reassuringly.

"Did Stanly ask you to come to see me, Mrs. Gale? I wished to go to you yesterday, but Stanly——"

"I know. Stanly wishes things his way. He doesn't know that I've come to see you. He told me last night of your engagement, and——"

"You don't mind?" The bright color burned to ashes in the girl's cheeks and the hand that held back the curtain trembled.

Joan Gale saw it and was sorry.

"I do mind very much, my dear—that is why I came. You have no mother, Stanly told me."

"No." The hand holding the folds of the curtain clenched, and the girl swayed.

"Come sit by me in this low rocking-chair—I'm going to talk to you as I would to my own daughter if I had been given one. I am very glad for Stanly, child—very glad. The mother-part of me rejoices." The girl looked up gratefully. "But I can't let you marry Stanly without telling you many things. It's not easy for me to talk of these things to a stranger; though our love in common for the boy could hardly make strangers of us, could it? You love him and I love him. He's all that I have—all that's near and dear to me; and yet, I've come to ask you to give him up, to hurt my boy—for your sake."

"I can't understand," the girl exclaimed pitifully yet half defiantly.

"I could understand your wanting to keep him, but——"

"My dear, you must know Stanly well, his temperament, his tastes——"

"I do, and I'm so proud of him."

"So am I. He's at home writing sonnets to you now, I've no doubt, breathing the fire and dew of his nature on paper—and next week it may be the minarets of Ispahan that set his brain whirling. It's not my boy, Betty—may I call you that?—but the poet in him I must warn you against. You wouldn't be happy, you couldn't be happy with him. It's my shame to tell you this, but justice, duty forced me to come. I know the charm of his ways, his thoughts, I know the heedlessness of his nature. You could sooner dam the sea than limit his horizon. His fancies shift and change as waves beating upon many shores. He's a slave to ideas and can't be true to any of them except for the thrall of the moment; God made him so. The artistic temperament is fascinating, alluring to study, but it breaks the heart of the woman who loves the man." The girl sat huddled in the low chair, her face hid in her hands, very quiet. "It's as hard for me to tell you as for you to endure." Joan Gale's firm mouth quivered. "I wouldn't hurt him, I don't willingly play the surgeon to you, but from what he has told me I knew that you were not the woman to bear what must come to you through his misfortune; and for the very love of woman to woman I came to save you, Betty. You have no mother and if—when Stanly fails you—you have no one—" Her voice broke and she looked silently at the bowed young figure rocking to and fro.

"You can't love him as I do!" The girl spoke challengingly. "He needs understanding, sympathy, he needs me."

The sternness which for a moment darted across Joan Gale's face softened to pity.

"Love him, child? I would lay down my life for him. The lean flame of genius smolders in his soul; it

consumes the human in him to illuminate its own burning; he can't free himself from its blaze. The flame was kindled at his birth, separating him from us by its intensity. He's no more responsible than the wind God creates to blow where it listeth. I've learned through much suffering, Betty; now I understand. A mother was born to suffer. The child brings her first pang, and rains the last blow on her heart; but we mothers would save other women. Genius is for a pedestal, not a companion. Do you understand me, child?"

"I can't believe it—I can't believe it! There never was anyone so true, so tender as Stanly. And our beautiful dreams, and——"

"He believes every one of them now," the older woman said gently. A weary look of defeat graying her face, she rose to go.

"I haven't done any good by coming, but I shall sleep better tonight. Oh, my dear," she took the girl's cold hand in hers, "I know all you would tell me. I know his fascination, his dazzling ambitions, his charm; his mother glories in them—his wife must not suffer from them. It's the every-day men, thoughtful, considerate men with the gift of goodness, kindness, unselfishness that illumine our lives and make them blessed. Remember I tell you this, at the risk of playing traitor to my boy. I couldn't let you marry Stanly without telling you." After an awkward pause she said quietly: "Stanly tells me your father is going away on a scientific expedition. You will be quite alone?"

"I have relatives to whom I can go."

"Promise me to think over what I've told you. I shall tell Stanly tonight. Remember, I shall always be your friend, even if it's hard for you to realize it. You must come to me for a time when your father has gone. And let me thank you for the soft pillow and the little cares for my comfort. It's very sweet, and I'm not used to being looked after."

"I forgot," Betty apologized; "you

must have tea with me. I can make it very nicely. Please don't go now."

Joan Gale settled herself at the little table, drank tea and nibbled at sugared cakes, talking trifling nothings in her charming way, while, with both women, the words that were aching in their hearts remained unsaid.

But Joan Gale knew that she had failed.

The epithalamium Stanley Gale composed for his wedding, and which was afterward published, the critics of two continents praised as worthy of Shelley.

Hiram Carston went overseas to his scientific work, and the young people made their home near Joan Gale. With her broad judgment she would not have them with her, even though she hungered for it; it was not just to the girl. But she missed her son's springing step—the hopeful incarnation of youth—at her door, the reading of lines at night, midnight or any time he chose to waken her, his good-night kiss; she missed comforting his despair when for moody days he sat silently brooding, and sharing his exultation when his heart soared with his song. These she put from her and waited, in the patience of loneliness, for what the future held for all of them.

Stanley was writing sonnets to his wife—he had planned a full hundred of them—and was deep in the enthusiasm of his subject. Betty's face reflected the shine of his inspiration, and the sweet soul, unmasked in her gentle eyes and compassionate lips, made her almost beautiful in those days when he wrote and dreamed, content to be hedged by domestic limitations.

The delight of hovering about his study-door and guarding him from all intrusion, the exquisite pleasure of listening to the lilting lines when he granted her an audience, their strolls through the dusk while he poured out his wide plans to her eager listening, the rare weaving of their future, were fascinating dreams she never forgot the thrill of. Those new days, if short days, were perfect days; "and a memory

is more than most women have," long afterward she said to his mother.

Joan Gale had just come in from evensong at St. Agatha's. Betty was awaiting her in the severe little den Mrs. Gale kept for her own, where she straightened up accounts and souls, helping the rector of St. Agatha's in careful gleaning. When he gave up a case he turned it over to her, and when she despaired of it there was no hope except from the Master, the rector of St. Agatha's declared—and he was a soldier of the church militant.

Mrs. Gale wondered why Betty sought the den. She generally avoided it, preferring the softer qualities of the living-room, which was more luxurious and free from taint of formatin. After disinfecting souls Mrs. Gale was often driven to disinfecting the den, and the family resented association with sin or disease; neither was in meter with poetic taste. But Betty was waiting for her in the revolving chair, her hands crossed on the desk. Her gray eyes held a suspicious touch of red about the lids.

"Midnight sonnet?" Mrs. Gale queried, smiling. "Come in where it's warm, dear. The living-room is full of roses Stanley sent me."

"No, let me stay here. Stanley is going away." Despair jarred the soft fabric of her voice as an ugly, sudden tear.

"Going away? Where? When did he decide?"

"Just now—he's packing. He sent me to tell you—he hadn't time to come—there's so much to do. I can't stay; I must see to his mending—he may be gone quite a time—" Her head drooped upon her hands and Joan Gale heard stifled sobs. In a flash the girl pulled herself together and sat straight, a brave smile on her face. "I told him to go," she declared doggedly, blood rising to her temples. "It isn't his fault. The sonnets won't do—the last half of them." She swallowed hard. "Anyhow he says no one could write sonnets but Shakespeare—the limitations are too narrow for great work, except for a master. I think so,



too. You remember he told you about the Armenian he met downtown; the one from Damascus he bought the dagger from. This man has enthused him with the spirit of the East. Stanly must be in the atmosphere, he must live in the rose-gardens, he must breathe the air to get the soul of it to do his great work. I can't go—now."

The older woman took her in her arms.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," she murmured.

"He must go, mother." It was the first time she had called her by that name. "I'm perfectly willing—I wish him to go."

"He shall not," Joan Gale spoke sternly.

"His genius is above us." The girl drew herself from the mother's arms. "He must go." She closed her soft, curved lips with a finality that could not be questioned. "I came to know whether you would stay with me? I'm a coward at night, you know—about noises and things, and—"

"You shall come to me. I can't stay away from my formalin—the people who need me are used to coming here, and are shy of new places—and it will be better for you to come to me. I'm glad, very glad to have you, dear. When is he going?"

"Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!"

"It will be over sooner. I'm glad that I don't have long to think of it. He will be in tonight to tell you good-bye. He takes the morning train to catch the Mediterranean steamer. The Armenian is going with him. I shall be here tomorrow night. Don't come to me before—please."

"My dear, my dear," Joan Gale repeated when the door closed; and sat staring dully at the report of St. Agatha's Guild on her desk.

In the early evening her son found her in the same place, still mechanically adding up the figures of the report of St. Agatha's Guild.

With light step, face vividly aglow, a line or two of Omar singing on his lips, he came to her. A quick pang

struck his heart when in the paling light he noted the aging of her fine face; but the mood passed swiftly as the white moth across the lamp-flame.

"Mother!" He held his hands out to her. "It has come to me—the epic. I wish that I had time to talk it over with you. This is to be the work of my life. I've the notes made, the meter chosen. The dreams are taking real shape; I see clearly. Now I will do something worthy of Betty and you. Dear little Betty!" He sat down and took the pen from his mother's hand, holding her slender fingers in his. "You'll look after her as you've always done everything for me? You will have each other and I'm not a bit needed—I leave a better substitute, so my mind's quite at rest." His voice was sweet, persuasive; a shine was in his eyes. "Can't you hear the nightingales and smell the roses with me—deep red roses? Can't you sense the dewy fragrance of the velvet petals in those nights heavy with old days and old tales? Mother, the divine things of the world make my soul tremble; I get so near. In Damascus I can do great work; it will be play to write what I see, what I feel—what I know. It's for Betty I'm going. The songs singing in my brain are driving me mad! When I'm there they will be freed."

"You must go," she asked slowly, "at this time, my son?"

"I'll go and come quickly; you understand. It's the call—I can't—I dare not deny it. But—when the burden grows too heavy for you write me, and I'll come—I promise—I'll come quickly. Now it must be good-bye. I've promised Betty to leave her for only a moment—you understand."

"I understand," she repeated, looking full into his eyes. "Remember, my son, the bond between mother and son is of birth; between man and wife it is made and can be easily broken. Is any verse, fame, glory, worth breaking a woman's heart?"

He flushed, enthusiasm sombering in his eyes.

"Betty urges me to go, mother. I leave her safely with you. You've never shirked my responsibilities before, and I've laid many on your shoulders." His voice grew more winning. "I wouldn't go if you were not here to bear them for me, as you will now. I go on the mission I was born for. No man can cast off his inheritance. I should go mad here, with the spirit of unrest tugging my heart out. You used to be quick to understand," he spoke aggrievedly. "Good-bye and God bless you, mother." He stooped and kissed her.

"God keep you!" the mother said softly.

The report for St. Agatha's was not finished. Betty was moved to the mother's home; and the nest so newly builded, shorn of its down, was leased to people unsentimental enough to desire a furnace more than the tender colorings of a room dedicated to love. Betty avoided passing its doors, and lived from one post to another, with, too often, waifs of verse alone as her reward. And then again long, burning letters flushed fire to her cheeks. Damascus gave to him of her richest treasures; the rose-gardens of his dreams blossomed, and he lingered in the dalliance of their shade, catching the note of the bulbul sung for him alone. The Armenian proved false and rifled his pocketbook, but the man had shown him the path to the gardens, so he shrugged his shoulders and laughed—money was but dross for food and drink—and little sufficed when a poet wrote ceaselessly to the music of dropping rose-petals. Joan Gale, from her small means, made good the financial loss.

It was better to publish in London, he wrote, and there he went. Steeped in the enchantment of his fancies, he drifted, lured by the siren voices of his ideas, slave to ideals that flashed in brilliant, elusive fantasia before his mental vision. In his satiety he wrote: "I am drinking the wine of life. I had rather empty the glass at one draught than sip it day by day. In that way you get but tantalizing hint of aroma;

my way, you drink to the full. It is far better to have one sated moment than many promises of much."

Intoxicated by his environment he lingered. After the riot of color and teeming story flagged upon his jaded taste, and the lees were bitter, the desert called him. When it was long over time for his return he wrote of burning wastes and purple sands, and that he must needs seek the great Silence wherein his soul must speak.

Long months Betty waited without complaint, defending when the mother ventured to blame. Then a little life wailed in the cottage.

It was at night over the cradle, while Betty slept, that ghosts of upbraiding thoughts haunted Joan Gale's conscience. Stanly was doing good work—great work. "The Garden of Damascus," dedicated to his wife, had lifted his name among the Immortals. The mother-pride was satisfied, and she held her breath for fear pride so intense was sin. But—she drew the knitted blanket close over the helpless, dimpled hands that struggled to be free—but that was not all; he had done the work he was born to do, yet it was at bitter cost. Betty was ill, uncomplainingly fading day by day, the delicate child practically fatherless. She buried her face in her hands, and the old, old question of right, ancient and importuning as in the beginning of time, clamored for justice.

The room was dark in shadow, only a night-taper swam in a cup of oil; and in its dimness distorted roses, fantastic and pale, as grown in the garden of Proserpine, grouped themselves upon the wall. The child cried in its sleep; already these emblems of his father's fame seemed to press heavy upon his little heart. Something thick in the air choked Joan Gale, and her eyes filled with tears. Tenderly she leaned over and smoothed the fuzz of soft hair, crooning an old nursery song while she patted the tiny bundle. Through the open door she could hear Betty tossing in her bed and catch a half-sob in her unresting sleep. The helplessness, the preciousness of the two smote her anew

in the night-hours—the clinging dependence of one soul upon another. And she, taking up her son's work, could do nothing but wait; and while she waited the two were swiftly gliding to the garden of shadows where no verse is sung and petals drop noiselessly—to what?

Her soul was shaken; her faith wavered. "My son, my son," the cry was wrung silent and bitter from her heart, "your roses are fed with blood!"

Am I not guilty with him in giving him freedom to wander? Having taken on his responsibilities have I not taken on his sin? she demanded accusingly of self. He would not have gone if I had refused to bear them. The thought struck her with the impact of a blow. Have I the right to fill another's place, even my son's? Am I not the very means of keeping him away, in carrying his burden of love and duty? These questions forced themselves brutally upon her; and stern and sad she sat by the cradle deep into the night, a sense of bloodguiltiness upon her, looking wide with dread and foreboding into the future. The laurel grown in tears was too dear at the price of a woman's heart. She had been proud of the fillet that bound his brow. Now, as in ages back, it was the woman who paid the price.

"You're looking better this morning," she said to the hollow-eyed mother who came eagerly in at the child's first morning cry.

"Yes. I was only tired yesterday—today the letter will come; and I dreamed last night that he was coming—"

"I wish that he were." The mother sighed.

Betty clutched her sleeve tightly.

"Don't you think it will be soon, mother? I'm afraid—so afraid I may not be here to meet him. He could not stand the pain if I were gone."

"Go to bed, dear, and rest; your feet are bare, your hands are hot. I'll care for the child."

Betty bent over him, her bright hair trailing in sweeping braid. "Pray with me, mother," she whispered,

"that he'll come to us soon—before it's too late."

"He shall," Joan answered grimly.

The little Church of St. Agatha's was dark, save for the red light of the sanctuary lamp illumining the pictured face of the Madonna over the altar, the Madonna of Pity. The sexton, as was his custom, had locked the door at an early hour, for people seldom sought the church late, and, moreover, he was anxious to be off to his comfortable room and comforting fire.

The night was cold, the interior of the church thick in shadow; he did not see the woman under the memorial cross in the nave of the building.

When he had gone Joan Gale knelt in the hush at the altar, the sanctuary light from above hallowing her strong, determined face. Baring her soul, she asked for truth and light to grope her way bravely through the twisting corridor of life, strength to follow its windings, courage to face its leading. Directly, honestly, she asked, pleading no extenuation, no palliation, excusing nothing. Effacing herself, could she not bring her son to see where duty and honor lay? He had said that he would come if she wrote. She had hesitated for his sake. If I write he will come, she repeated to herself. But will he stay? The question, blunt and ugly, obtruded itself. I must put myself away, so far that I cannot be reached; then his sense of honor will anchor him to his duty. His nature was too fine not to recognize that. In her eagerness to help she had been the wedge to keep them apart. Her son had been willing that she should bear his burden, and she had gladly shifted it to her shoulders. Now she must lay it down for the honor of his manhood. Much work was needed in the Sisterhood of St. John's, where the vineyard was large and the vintners few. The cries of hungry children and sin-tortured souls wailed at its doors, and the pitiful Sisters, wan and worn from heeding them, were too few for the labor. Was she a sacrifice fit to be accepted? She prayed that a sign

might be granted her. Her heart, quivering with regret of past mistakes, reached out for larger things.

How still it was! Dead incense made the air heavy and sweet, clinging to her garments. How still the air—silence so deep that breathing was sound and her very soul trembled in the hush of it. She knelt as a child, and asked of the Master His will, imploring that she might be purified, worthy to serve Him, and through that service right a wrong. The stillness of the church was healing, the silence eloquent to her; the shadows were as that wide future into which she would plunge trustfully, unknowing what it held for her. In the loneliness of her soul she reached from great depths to great heights.

Far into the night, not knowing weariness, nor cold, nor pain, she knelt, her head low on the altar rail, stifling the voices of revolt, seizing the hand of faith.

To her faint vision the crosses on the stained windows stretched processional before her, the shadowed future hedged by their gaunt arms to which she raised her hands to cling. How long she knelt she knew not; but when she looked up the face of the Madonna was pale in the colorless rays of dawn thrusting in through the window at the side of the altar.

Stiffened and cramped from long vigil, she rose from her knees, peace in her heart, peace of the conquering; the long veil draped a face glorified.

She groped for the sacristy door, turned the key and let herself out. A curious lightness exhilarated her. She no longer walked on earth; her tread was on something finer. Slowly she looked upward and smiled. It was the supreme surrender of self. The fire that burned in her eyes glinted of purer flame than of earth. Consecrate she stood to noble purpose; what it cost was between God and her soul.

Going straight to the little den she sat down and wrote:

"I can no longer bear the burden. Come—come quickly."

"God forgive!" The words choked from her throat. "My son—my son!"

The door opened suddenly and she felt a touch on her shoulder.

"Stanly!" There was all of motherhood in the startled cry.

He stood before her, the glory of the morning in his face, eagerness of expectation in his eyes. Throwing his arms impetuously about her, "Betty?" he asked, and started across the room.

"Wait a moment, son. She was not well last night and she is sleeping very quietly now. Don't disturb her yet. It's nothing"—she saw the passing agony in his face—"only she's tired. It's been that way since the baby came—"

"My son!"

"Your son," his mother repeated.

"Thank God I'm home again." He sank into a chair. "The call of home was singing in my heart and I came as quickly as anything but wings could bring me. What peace here!" He looked about the quiet room and breathed deeply. "I've been traveling the world over to find it, to write of it—and here it's been waiting for me all the while."

"All the while," his mother answered gently.

"My public are tiring of gardens and imagery. It's the human touch that carries verse to heights—the beating of the great heart of the world. I have learned that, mother. And I've come home to find my inspiration in Betty and the baby and you. How I've longed for all of you! How shall I make up to myself for all I've lost! But I'm not going to brood over the past; it's bitter fasting on regret. I can't wait, mother. I must go in now. It's all so new and strange—the coming of life. I must see Betty; I must see—my son."

With long, light step he crossed the room, shutting the door behind him. Joan Gale heard the step change to a run. She hid her white face in her trembling hands. Facing the eternal law of motherhood she was alone. She must tread strongly the road she had set before her; it is so written for all mothers from the beginning of time. This weakness was not worthy

of a brave heart. The feel of his hands, the sound of his voice! It was Betty's right, their child's right, that he should come to them alone.

Stanly Gale rapped lightly on Betty's door. No answer but a fretted, disturbed wail from the child. When he entered the child had cuddled deep in its blankets, and was hushed. The night-taper spluttered low in the oil, making an uncanny glare in the sunlight pouring through the wide-opened windows. The room was littered with the baby's little things. A dropped blanket trailed over the side of the crib against the screen fencing it from the light. A half-filled cup of milk was set on the unlighted spirit lamp by the bed; and on the table, face downward, lay the "Sonnets to a Wife," as if the reader had soothed herself to sleep with the music of his verse. Yet, over the familiar things a strange, breathless air brooded; a hush of unreality held his step. He hesitated, and then with

eager smile bent over the bed to waken the sleeper.

How quiet she lay, one hand under white cheek, long lashes drooped over tired eyes! How childlike she looked, the lips curved in a half-smile as if pleasant dreams had stirred her sleep! Something held him; he would not waken her now. How white those cheeks and lips—how still and rigid the hands! How——

Joan Gale came quietly in and stood at his side.

"Betty!" He whispered the name. Still she lay calm and motionless, one hand under white cheek, long lashes drooped over tired eyes. "Betty!"

The hunger in his voice did not waken her; the sleeper did not stir.

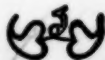
A startled light widened in Joan Gale's eyes blinding with tears. Softly she took the sleeping child from the cradle and went out, leaving them alone—the great unsolved mystery of death between them.



## THE MISTAKE

By Mary Hinman Paine

YEARS hence they'll take what's left of me  
 Away, and say that I'm just dead;  
 They will be wrong—I died the day  
 I knew your last fond word was said.



AS USUAL

FRIEND—Good stars, old man, you've a frightful cold. What are you taking for it?  
 SICK MAN (*hoarsely*) Advice.